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**Image and Analogy in Augustine's *De Trinitate* and the Dionysian *Corpus*:
A Comparative Study**

John Paul Skiffington Palmer

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Abstract

A survey of Christian doctrine quickly exposes the importance of any study of the theology of image, as it stands in at least some relation to the Doctrine of the Trinity, as well as Christology and the Doctrine of Creation. It is in recognition of this importance that leads one to a comparative study of Saint Augustine (354-430 AD) and the Pseudo-Dionysius (5th Century), who represent different understandings of the theology of image. The significance of a comparative study of these two is amplified when it is recognized that the former is perhaps the most influential Christian thinker in the West, while the later fulfils the same role, through his interpreters, in the East.

The approach of this study proceeds from an Augustinian point of view, with chapters following the basic movements of the *De Trinitate*, moving from *exteriora*, to *interiora*. Hence this thesis includes a study of the role and ontological place of the images of the scriptures. It then proceeds to discuss the Trinitarian *vestigia* in comparison with the various triads manifested by the Dionysian *Corpus*, and concludes with a two chapter discussion of the image of God in Man. One of these last two chapters is devoted to a study of Augustine and Dionysius in relation to a diverse sampling of Fathers' interpretation of Genesis 1:26. The second chapter takes up the implications of the breach with tradition made by Augustine, particularly as it affects the relationship between image and archetype.

The conclusion calls for further study, specifically evaluation of the differences detected in this paper, through the lense of Catholic doctrine, a study of the Medieval Latins and an understanding of Doctrinal Development.

**Image and Analogy in Augustine's *De Trinitate* and the Dionysian *Corpus*:
A Comparative Study.**

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The undertaking of this study came about through the influence of so many that it borders on the impossible to acknowledge them all. There are however two, without whose influence I might never have had the opportunity to attempt completion of an MA thesis. First, Dr. Patrick Malcolmson, who is responsible for demonstrating to me that I had something to offer in academic discussions. He encouraged me to think logically, and to put that logic down on paper that I might be able to make myself understood by others. I have never attained the level worthy of his tutelage, however without his influence and interest in me I would be no where near the humble level to which I have attained. Second, the Rev. Dr. Barry Craig, who with Dr. Malcolmson convicted me of the existence of Truth. It was Fr. Craig, however, who introduced me to the fullness of truth that is the Christian religion through Dante and Augustine, while at the same time fostering the willingness to see that same truth running in limited form through the works of the ancients. From him I also first learned to value the Tradition of the Church as found in the Book of Common Prayer.

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List of Abbreviations

	Primary Texts	
Athanasius	<i>De Incarnatione</i>	<i>De Incar.</i>
Aquinas	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>	<i>Sum. Th.</i>
Augustine	<i>De Trinitate</i>	DT
Bonaventura	<i>Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum</i>	<i>Itin.</i>
Dante	<i>Paradiso</i>	<i>Par.</i>
Dionysius	<i>The Celestial Hierarchy</i>	CH
	<i>The Divine Names</i>	DN
	<i>The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy</i>	EH
	<i>The Mystical Theology</i>	MT
Eriugena	<i>Periphyseon</i>	<i>Peri.</i>
Gregory of Nyssa	<i>On the Making of Man</i>	<i>De opi. hom.</i>
Irenaeus	<i>Adversus Haereses</i>	<i>Adv. Haer.</i>
Origen	<i>De Principis</i>	<i>De. princ.</i>
Plato	<i>The Republic</i>	<i>Rep.</i>
Plotinus	<i>The Enneads</i>	<i>Enn.</i>

Introduction

A. Importance of Image.

The general importance of the theology of image within Christian doctrine should be clear to anyone who spends time in concentrated study of the scriptures and the patristic texts. Its consequences are far-reaching, a fact indicated by the concept's appearance within lengthy discussions in the works of many of the Church Fathers including figures such as Saint Irenaeus, Saint Athanasius and Saint Gregory of Nyssa, as well as controversial figures such as Origen, all of whom will receive brief treatment in this text. In addition to the group cited above, one must include the two writers who are the central focus of this thesis paper; Saint Augustine and the Pseudo-Dionysius.¹ While the frequency with which the theology of image is discussed is an indication of its overall weight, it might be argued that it is not frequency which dictates importance. The reason the concept of image is so frequently engaged is because it strikes at the very heart of Christianity having a central place in discussions of Trinitarianism, Christology, and the relation between Man and his Creator which includes the doctrine of the Incarnation. In support of this claim, Vladimir Lossky notes,

The theme of the image, in the knowledge of God and man, is of such importance for Christian thought that I think we are justified in speaking of a "theology of image" in the New Testament or in the work of a particular Christian writer without fear of magnifying a doctrinal element of secondary value out of all due proportion.²

It will be the attempt of this thesis to take this very important topic, and focus discussion around the work of Augustine and Dionysius. In order for this task to be

¹ Note that the Pseudo-Dionysius will herein after be referred to simply as Dionysius.

² Lossky (1974), 125.



accomplished honestly it is important that a portion of this paper be devoted to study of the texts apart from many secondary sources. It may easily happen, that over time, what each writer actually says within their respective texts comes to be replaced by caricature and assumption in popular scholarship, for instance true emphases may be lost and replaced by a single idea that is treated in more articles than others. This is a problem which is the direct result of a falling away from textual readings.³ With hope of avoiding this undesirability, there will be a strong attempt to present the arguments from the texts themselves, and to refer to them throughout.

B. Justification of Texts.

In order to preform a suitable study of the theology of image in Augustine and Dionysius and to relate that discussion to the texts as advocated above, one must decide which texts to make extensive use of. Texts, therefore, have been narrowed down to the *De Trinitate* of Augustine, on one hand, and the entire Dionysian *Corpus*, on the other.

Selecting an appropriate text for Augustine is a taxing affair due to one major factor beyond all others. In his recent work, Serge Lancel suggests that the body of writing bequeathed to modernity by Augustine exceeds eighty volumes.⁴ Amongst this great number almost all make at least some reference to the concept of image, therefore isolation of discussion to the *De Trinitate* must be justified. Thankfully, it is an easy case to make. While the concept of image is present in many Augustinian writings, the *De Trinitate* is 'the principal source of teaching,' when it comes to the subject of image. The Augustinian image-theology is 'inextricably bound up with the Trinitarian

³ A fact recognized by Lossky (1954) in which he draws out the existence of the negative way in the thought of Augustine, when most want to discuss Dionysius as representing the negative way and Augustine the affirmative.

⁴ For a complete list see Lancel (2002), 559-573.

doctrine,' as will become clear later in this paper.⁵ The *De Trinitate* is Augustine's most exhaustive treatment of the Trinity, therefore, is the most logical place to turn.

In the case of Dionysius, the narrowing of texts presents very little problem as the author has left only one small body of existent writing, which will hereafter simply be referred to as the *Corpus*. The *Corpus* consists of four treatises; *The Divine Names*, *The Mystical Theology*, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, as well as nine short epistles written to various Christians. Isolation of Dionysian texts is further facilitated by the fact that much scholarship advocates the position that the texts form a coherent system, making it unwise to separate any one treatise from the context provided for it by the others.⁶ In addition to these two facts, the *Corpus* clearly contains much discussion of the notion of image. This is evidenced in *The Divine Names* in which the Light of God is poured out through the scriptural names of God, each representing the Divine in a particular way, as well as the hierarchical treatises, in which the hierarchies themselves are discussed as images, as well as those individual parts which make them up. For Dionysius there is one set of treatises and they speak volumes about the theology of image, making the decision obvious.

In initial observation of the texts selected it appears that they have little in common. Augustine wrote copiously in the *De Trinitate* and in many lengthy, well drawn out books, while Dionysius wrote short and fractured writings, which are less systematic than the topical work of Augustine. While difference is not something that will be denied by this paper, it cannot be denied here that despite surface differences in structure, Dionysius and Augustine are both deeply concerned with the notion of image,

⁵ Sullivan (1963), ix.

⁶ For excellent arguments in regard to the coherence of the Dionysian system see Rorem (1984), and Rorem (1980) especially.

its content, and its role in the relationship between God and Man.

C. Outline of the Project.

While the texts admit that they are dealing with the same question, their respective authors represent differing approaches to this shared issue. This study, then, will open with a clear reading of the texts of each author, as advocated above in hope of presenting a clear view of the theology of image embedded there. This reading of the texts will form the basis for discussion of the questions that will be raised and explored later in this thesis. A close textual reading of each author, therefore, will occupy Chapters One and Two.

Upon presentation of the movement and argument of the Augustinian and Dionysian texts, it should be clear that, for each author, the scriptures are full of images and that the scriptural images have specific roles in understanding Man's relation to God. In its exploration of the nature of scriptural images, this thesis paper will engage the role of the scriptural images within the overall systems of both Augustine in the *De Trinitate* and Dionysius in his *Corpus*, as well as their content and the method of their interpretation, and will question their overall importance within each system. This discussion will occupy Chapter Three.

Next, in Chapter Four, this thesis paper will explore a noted similarity which runs throughout both systems. These are what are known as the *vestigia* in Augustine and the triads discussed in the works of Dionysius. There exists scholarship which attempts to draw links between these entities of thought in the work of each author, so it will be the attempt of the fourth chapter to define them in order that valid comparisons can be made and their importance fully appreciated.⁷

Chapter Five will begin a section composed of two chapters in which Christian

⁷ Pelikan (1987), 19.

anthropology will be discussed through developing an understanding of the role of the created image of God in Man within each of the authors. This task will begin with Chapter Five's discussion of how each author stands in relation to the Patristic tradition which precedes them by comparing their thoughts to those of a few prominent Fathers. Out of this study arises a major question which cannot be ignored in a comparison of Augustine and Dionysius . Therefore, a discussion of either proximity (in the case of Augustine), or distance (in the case of Dionysius) from the archetype (God), when speaking of the divine image in Man will be explored in Chapter Six. The conclusion will outline the discoveries of the previous chapters, as well as making some initial suggestions with regard to how one might go about evaluating what has been presented in this thesis.

D. Why Compare Augustine and Dionysius?

Given the importance of the concept of image within Christian doctrine, it is of some concern to note that, as will be argued, there are strong difference which exist between Augustine, who is perhaps the dominant figure in the theology of image in Western Christendom, and Dionysius, who shares a similar role - through his interpreters - in the Eastern tradition.⁸ While these are a matter of genuine concern for Christians, both of the East and West, they must not lead one to attempt formulation of some superficial level of similarity so that conflict might be avoided. As Pope Benedict XVI points out in an essay on ecumenism, any real hope of reconciliation lies first in honest positing of differences in order that real dialogue may take place.⁹

Herein lies one motivation for this study. This paper will be a very modest

⁸ See Louth (1996) on Maximus for a discussion of the integration of Dionysius into the Eastern tradition through Saint Maximus the Confessor.

⁹ Ratzinger. (1995), 231-244.

attempt to freely allow difference to be noted and true discussion, in the form of positing some reasons for difference, attempted. The difficulty in writing a thesis paper this short in length is that it must be restricted to raising the differences and positing reasons for them, to the neglect of drawing conclusions with respect to which position is correct, a task far beyond any MA thesis. The first motivation, then, in undertaking a study of Augustine and Dionysius is because of where the two end up, as pillars of their respective traditions yet differing on issues raised in the discussion of image.

The second motivation for undertaking such a study arises out of where Augustine and Dionysius come from. While difference has been noted freely to this point, both Augustine and Dionysius arise from a common philosophic spring: Neoplatonism.¹⁰ This common ancestry makes their difference all the more interesting.

Amongst other things Neoplatonism has a great concern for the concept of image, stemming back to Plato, who all Neoplatonists see themselves as interpreters of. The Platonic notion of image undergoes alteration throughout its history, as a result of the various figures who undertake discussion of it, but as they are all discussions of Plato, he must be our starting point.

Plato's notion of image is inseparably tied to his overarching understanding of reality. It is his suggestion that the world of reality is the intelligible world of the Forms, while what is experienced by men is a lie. This position is perhaps best explained by the famous 'Allegory of the Cave' in his dialogue *The Republic*.¹¹ In it the world of the Truth is depicted as being outside the cave in the sunlight, while the prisoners are stuck in the deception of the inner bowels of the cave where they are only

¹⁰ For a concise discussion of the characteristic of the Neoplatonists, as well as a systematic treatment of their divergences see Wallis (1972).

¹¹ *Rep.* 514a - 516c.

allowed to see the reflections of handmade puppets cast on the cave wall. They are removed from seeing Truth by at least three degrees. Not only do they not see the reflection of real animals cast on the cave wall by the Sun, but rather they only see cut-outs representing animals, whose shadows are cast by a fire, rather than by the Sun itself. Taking this allegory as a simplistic starting point, it seems somewhat unlikely that Plato holds the material realm to be a very truthful reflection of the realm of the Forms.

The only remaining element which can allow Man to return to the Truth, is through his own soul. Plato suggests that the soul once contemplated the Forms, before it was joined to the body. Its real home is with the Forms, it shares a kinship with them. For Plato, then, the only thing attached to the material realm which stands in relation to the Forms is the Soul. In order to attain Truth, or true knowledge, the soul must learn to ignore the changing things of this realm and focus on that which is unchanging, beginning obviously with his own soul, being the most immediately accessible. Andrew Louth describes the soul's ascent as, 'A long gradual process of detachment from false reality and attachment to, and growing familiarity with, true reality...'.¹² As in the cave, even though the material realm is ultimately deceptive, the process of returning to the sunlight is gradual, peeling away each level of error as one ascends. It is not that Plato is suggesting that there is something desirable about the sensible realm, but that it must be used as a means of gradual exposure to the Truth, because Man is so sunken onto the material realm.

For Plato, then, the *cosmos* is an unreliable manifestation of the Forms and its

¹² Louth (1981), 6.

value as an image of the insensible would seem to be very limited.¹³ The soul on the other hand, shares a kinship with the Forms themselves and is Man's portal to Truth, suggesting that the soul does truly represent the divine realm.

For Plotinus, the first of the Neoplatonists, the sensible realm, or the realm of bodies, takes on a more clear relation to the One than it did in the Platonic scheme. He articulates a process called 'emanation', or the movement from the One into multiplicity, by a sort of rippling out of each level in the cosmic hierarchy flowing into the next. The *cosmos* consists of three *hypostases*, The One, Intellectual-Principle, and Soul which comes into relationship with Body. There is an interconnectedness throughout the whole *cosmos*. Each lower level is referred to as the image of the previous level. It is less than the archetype, but it is never completely severed from it.¹⁴ The Intellectual-Principle is an image of the One; Soul is an image of the Intellectual-Principle. This does not end with the three *hypostases*, but rather this continuity carries over into the realm of bodies. In the fourth *Ennead* Plotinus suggests,

There is, besides, no principle that can prevent anything from partaking, to the extent of its own individual receptivity, in the nature of Good. If, therefore Matter has always existed, that existence is enough to ensure its participation in the being which, according to each receptivity, communicates the supreme Good universally: if on the contrary, Matter has come into being as a necessary sequence of the causes preceding it, that origin would similarly prevent it standing apart from the scheme as though it

¹³ This reading of Plato is questioned by many, see for instance Armstrong (1990). 72. in which he argues that too large a divide has been placed between the Forms and the Material world. He suggests that Plato has much use for the material realm supposing that one does not, 'try to possess them and exploit them for transitory and illusory purposes.' He suggests that there is a fuller account of this relationship in the *Timaeus*, as does Plotinus, see *Enn.* IV.8.[1].335.

¹⁴ For Plotinus' discussion of image as lesser, but still related to the archetype, see *Enn.* V. I. [3]. 350. The Divine Mind 'may be thought of as a father watching over the development of his child born imperfect in comparison with himself.'

were out of reach of the principle to whose grace it owes its existence.

In the following paragraph he sums up this discussion by concluding that, ‘...the loveliness that is in the sense-realm is an index of the nobleness of the intellectual sphere...’.¹⁵ As Armstrong suggests in his article, ‘The Divine Enhancement of Earthly Beauties’, whether or not this is the doctrine of Plato, it can be said for certain that the use of material beauty is given more clarity by the writings of Plotinus.¹⁶ For Plotinus, the material realm, the realm of bodies, is an image of the One, through its relationship to Soul and the Intellectual-Principle.

The soul then, as one might expect, is also an image of the highest reality. Plotinus opens the eighth tractate of the fourth Ennead with a discussion as of how the soul may retain its divine image despite existing in relationship with material bodies. Part of the answer has already been given; bodies in the Plotinian system cannot be regarded as evil because of their ultimate procession from the Divine Mind. This argument takes place within the context of a discussion about whether it should be held that the soul, through some fault of its own, is sentenced into the realm of bodies.¹⁷ As long as the soul does not enter too deeply into the body, ie. in the experiencing of pleasures, it can image the divine quite effectively, although even in its worst state it still retains its status as image.

The soul is granted a special distinction, along with its having a divine connection. It is said that the Plotinian soul contains ‘...all the divine Hypostases within

¹⁵ *Enn.* IV. 8.[6]. 341.

¹⁶ Armstrong (1990). 72.

¹⁷ It is here that Plotinus suggests that Plato gives a different account of the relationship between soul and body in the *Timaeus*. See *Enn.* IV.8.[1].355.

her.’¹⁸ The soul of Man then, not only possess an image of the Divine, but also an image of the entire cosmological structure. Not only are the elements of the *cosmos* seen as images, but also the soul itself is an image of the entire *cosmos*.

Neoplatonism remains somewhat consistent in terms of the relationship between the *hypostases* in the works of Iamblichus and Proclus. Roughly speaking, it continues to be said that the lower are images of the higher, although much discussion and development occurs with regard to matters peripheral to this thesis.¹⁹ What does change which has rather interesting implications for this work is that in Iamblichus and Proclus, the soul is determined to have fallen completely away from the One (a matter which sets them apart from Plotinus as seen above, where the soul is said to remain in some contact with the Divine despite it’s relation to the material realm).²⁰ While Plotinus could look to the soul and see the beauty of the *cosmos* and through contemplation return to the One, Iamblichus and Proclus require external stimulation to effect the return. This usually took the form theurgy. Although cosmologically much remains the same, questions arise as to the importance and ability of the soul’s functioning as an image.

Throughout this thesis discussion we will return to the Neoplatonic view of image in order to help clarify Augustine and Dionysius’ positions. This common ancestry will both help to track down similarity and explain difference.

Before proceeding to the discussion of image, which will be the focus of this paper, a brief detour will be made for discussion of biography.

E. Biographies.

As the works of Augustine and Dionysius, at least on the surface, look so very

¹⁸ Wallis (1972). 72.

¹⁹ See Wallis (1972), 1-15. for general outlines of commonalities in the Neoplatonists.

²⁰ See Wallis (1972) 153. for a discussion of this point.

different so do their biographies take extremely different forms. Composition of a biography for Augustine is made relatively simple for two reasons. First, because of his impact left directly on well known historical situations, and second, because of the vast amount of auto-biographical writing he produced in works such as the *De Beata Vita*, the *Confessiones*, the *Retractationes*, *Sermo 355* and *356* as well as a plethora of personal letters written to various individuals.²¹

It is said of Augustine that he lived out the bridge between the so-called Dark Ages and the Medieval period.²² He was born on 13 November 354 AD in a small town called Thagaste situated in the north of Africa.²³ His father kept a form of employment that placed his family in the middle classes of the Roman system, allowing Augustine a basic education. He soon demonstrated academic promise which outstretched the bounds of his local school in his native town so his father subsidized a move to a school of greater reputation at Madauros, where he moved at the age of eleven. Upon completion of studies at Madauros Augustine moved on to Carthage where he read Cicero's work, *Hortensius*, sparking in him the quest for truth above all else.

At Carthage Augustine adopted Manicheism, finding in it an intellectual stimulation that surpassed the simple faith of his mother Saint Monica. As a devotee of Mani, Augustine returned to Thagaste in order to take a position teaching grammar between 373-374 AD, then spent a brief period at Carthage in 383 AD, followed by arrival in Rome in the autumn of the same year, where his search for truth lead to a rejection of the dualistic position of the Manichees, and then to Milan in autumn of 384

²¹ Trape (1986), 343.

²² Armstrong (1967), 341.

²³ For Augustine's biographical information I have used Lancel (2002). It is the more recent of a string of biographies covering the life of Augustine and it incorporates recent finds among his sermons and personal letters.

AD to work as a civil servant.

At Milan Augustine encountered Saint Ambrose, by whose preaching he was convinced of the intellectual content of the faith which he had once written off as simplistic. At the age of 32, in 386 AD, Augustine became convinced of the Christian position and he resigned from his post at Milan. Within the first few weeks of 387 AD he entered the catechetical school in preparation for Baptism.

Having already begun a battle with the Manicheans in writing, Augustine was ordained priest in 391 AD and in 395 AD he was consecrated 'co-Bishop' under the supervision of aged Bishop Valerius of Hippo. His episcopacy is marked by the writing of several major works, such as the *Confessiones* (397- 401 AD), the *De Trinitate* (400 - 419 AD), and the *De Civitate Dei* (412-425), as well as various treatises and books on Donatism, Arianism, Pelagianism, and the Pagans. Augustine died upon the collapse of the Roman Empire in Africa, with the Vandals sitting at the proverbial door while he lay on his death bed.

Unlike Augustine, Dionysius has left very little that can be said for certain about him. Internal evidence, within the Dionysian *Corpus*, would have its reader believe that the writer is the same Dionysius who is converted by Saint Paul in Acts 17.²⁴ This claim, although accepted for some time (first questioned in 530 AD),²⁵ was conclusively disproved in 1895 AD.²⁶ It has been suggested that Dionysius was, in reality, the Monophysite patriarch of Antioch named Severus as his writings are thought to have

²⁴ Rorem (1993), 3.

²⁵ This suspicion is heightened by the fact, as pointed out in footnotes in the Paulist Press edition of Dionysius' works, that he cites both Ignatius of Antioch and either Clement of Rome, or Clement of Alexandria, both of whom would have written later than the Dionysius mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.

²⁶ This was achieved by Koch and Stiglmayr according to Rorem (1993), 17 and Rorem (1984),4.

first been cited by Monophysites at a council responding to Chalcedon in 525 AD.²⁷

This postulation is unlikely upon reading defences of Dionysius' orthodoxy presented by Saint Maximus and John of Scythopolis.²⁸

He is dated by various subtle factors involving internal evidence within his texts. For instance, due to the fact that he cites the Creed as having been sung at the Mass, he is roughly dated to the vicinity of the fifth century, when this enters common practice.²⁹ Also, there has been scholarly work which draws conclusive links between Dionysius and his reliance on the writings of Proclus, a fifth century Neoplatonist.³⁰ I.P. Sheldon-Williams notes a connection between Dionysius and the Cappodocian Fathers.³¹ These evidences all place him somewhere around the 5th Century.

²⁷ This theory is mentioned in Pelikan (1987), 13 but he ultimately rejects the theory. Dionysius is also charged with heresy by E.R. Dodd in his introduction to Proclus' *Elements of Theology* (xxxii), and Moss (1961), 91. His orthodoxy is also questioned by Copleston (1993), 97.

²⁸ Pelikan (1987), 15.

²⁹ Louth (1981), 161.

³⁰ See Saffrey (1982) for a record of the evidence.

³¹ Sheldon-Williams (1967*b*), 457.

Chapter One:
Image and Analogy in Saint Augustine's De Trinitate.

A. Movement of the *De Trinitate*.

Turning to discussion of the notion of image in the *De Trinitate*, the first project must be to provide an outline of the overall movement of the work. This must be done so that, not only can the various levels of imagery be pointed out, but also that the role of each level of imagery may be understood by seeing it preform its proper function.

There have been a plethora of attempts by a multitude of authors to determine the scope of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, however, that being said, one undeniable purpose jumps to the forefront. This purpose is as, Sr. Mary Clark describes it, '...an attempt to think about the divine Trinity, to come to know it as far as possible through a proper understanding of the scriptures and the human soul.'³² Its ultimate purpose is to further Man's knowledge of God, and in so doing ultimately find the path to blessedness, or perfect union with God in the beatific vision. 'Chercher la connaissance de Dieu, c'est chercher la beatitude,' as Vladimir Lossky puts it.³³

Having, in the most preliminary of ways, answered the question as to the purpose of the *De Trinitate* our attention must now turn to the method that is undertaken to that suggested end. Fr. Robert Crouse suggests that the treatise is summarized in the movement from the 'temporal to the eternal, from the external to the internal', or using the proper Latin terms *exteriora*, *interiora*, and ending with the *superiora*.³⁴ While this is true, there are sub-movements within each section worth noting. It is these which the

³² Clark (1995), 58.

³³ Lossky (1954), 575-581. This quotation is roughly translated: 'to seek knowledge of God is to seek blessedness.'

³⁴ Crouse (1975), 506.

next portion of the text will be concerned with.

Augustine's voyage of the mind to God begins in revelation, which for him constitutes the scriptures.³⁵ What is revealed to the mind is the doctrine of the Trinity. The point is often made by many scholars that Augustine begins with the very point that he will seek to demonstrate. Fr. Crouse suggests that, '...the concept of the Trinity grasped by faith is the starting point and guide to an understanding of self consciousness while the understanding of self, is in turn the continuing and evermore complete demonstration of that starting point.'³⁶

The *De Trinitate* begins with a survey of God's Word in an attempt to set before the reader the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity as a way of thinking about God. As Augustine himself says,

The purpose of all the Catholic commentators I have been able to read on the divine books of both testaments, who have written before me on the trinity which God is, has been to teach that according to the scriptures Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore are not three God's but one God...³⁷

This is accomplished through the drawing out of the testimonies of the Scriptures with regards to the divinity of Christ (Book II), the divinity of the Spirit (Book III) and a brilliant numerological discussion (Book IV). At this stage the reader grasps the truth of God at the level of belief. It is Augustine's hope that though the following process, the mind will travel from belief to understanding, and hence become ever more prepared for

³⁵ This of course is making use of an anachronistic book title, that of Saint Bonaventua's *Itinerarium*.

³⁶ Crouse (1975), 510.

³⁷ DT.1.2.[7].69. All future citations of the *De Trinitate* will follow this pattern; book. chapter. [paragraph].page(s).

the beatific vision.

The first major shift in the argument occurs in Book VII, where the image of God in Man first presents itself as a topic for discussion.³⁸ Augustine suggests that when God says, 'Let us make man in our image' in the Book of Genesis, He is claiming not only that He is placing His image in Man, but that by the plural 'our', He is fashioning that image in a Trinitarian pattern.³⁹ It is this passage which sparks the movement from the doctrine of the Trinity revealed in Scripture and held externally, to the searching for the image of the Trinity which is located in the self. If God has created Man in His image, and He is Trinity as indicated in the scriptures particularly by the plurals 'us' and 'our' in Genesis 1:26, then the image of God must be Trinitarian.⁴⁰ This is the movement from *exteriora* into the *interiora*.

Within the *interiora* Augustine progresses from the more external *interiora* to the more internal, from the 'outer' to the 'inner' man, to make use of Saint Paul's terminology. In Chapter 3 of Book IV Augustine says;

What we are now trying to do is to examine this question in the human mind; here our own nature can, so to say, answer our questions more familiarly; and so after practising the mind's gaze on the lower image we may be able to shift from the illuminated creature to the unchangeable illuminating light.⁴¹

Augustine winds his way through an exploration of other possible 'trinities', using a distinction between the 'outer man', which is involved with the senses, and then the

³⁸ DT. VII.3.[11].229-230.

³⁹ Genesis 1:26.

⁴⁰ It is often claimed that this linking of image-doctrine with the doctrine of the Trinity is unique to Saint Augustine, however, Mary T. Clark points out that it is 'certainly present in Victorinus'. See Clark (1994), 67. This topic will be treated further in Chapter Five.

⁴¹ DT. IX.3.[17].280.

‘inner man’, involved with the understanding, until subsequently arriving at the satisfying conclusion; memory, will, and understanding located within the soul.⁴²

Augustine has not yet reached the conclusion of his voyage. In many places, but perhaps the most strongly in Chapter 4 of Book IX, Augustine reminds his reader that the discovery of the image of God in Man is not the final conclusion, but that the image serves the purpose of moving us to the *superiora*, to an illuminated understanding of God that could not be had while eyes rest on the corporeal or created. The reader is now on the path to understanding. Augustine states:

This Trinity of the mind is not really the image of God because the mind remembers and understands and loves itself, but because it is also able to remember and understand and love him by whom it was made. And when it does this it becomes wise. If it does not do it, then even though it remembers and understands and loves itself, it is foolish.⁴³

B. Introduction to the Theology of Image in the *De Trinitate*.

For Augustine, along with the rest of the Christian tradition, the consummation of the human life is found in the vision of God, and it is the movement toward this vision that is described in detail in his great work the *De Trinitate*, as has been discussed above. Augustine reminds his readers early in that work that Man is, as Saint Paul puts it in his First letter to the Corinthians, desirous of seeing God ‘face to face’.⁴⁴

On immediate analysis, the attainment of this goal would seem to present Man with a tremendous problem. While on one hand Augustine is adamant in insisting that the beatific vision is the human end, on the other hand, he also reminds the reader of

⁴² DT. XIV.4.[15].383.

⁴³ DT. XIV.4.[15].383.

⁴⁴ 1 Cor 13:12.

two elements which would serve to make this end impossible. First is the issue of human sinfulness. Sin by definition is separation from God, and thus must run directly counter the human end, i.e. union in the beatific vision. The other issue which presents itself is God's ultimate transcendence. 'Now divinity cannot be seen by human sight in any way whatever,' as Augustine suggests in Book I.⁴⁵

God will solve both of these objections by the Incarnation. Augustine suggests that God's taking human flesh is not only to be the 'sacrifice once offered for the sins of the whole world', but also a condescension to the lowly estate of Man. It is an appeal to the senses of His creature whose spiritual vision has been clouded as a result of the Fall. As Augustine says, Man comes to understand 'the invisible things of God by understanding them through those that have been made.'⁴⁶ It is along the principle of the Incarnation that Augustine's notion of image will develop.

In addition to this principle, in Book VIII Augustine recognizes another question which lies very much at the heart of the notion of image. He says,

But we also have to stand by and cling to this good in love, in order to enjoy the presence of him from whom we are, whose absence would mean that we could not even be. For since *we are still walking by faith and not by sight* (2 Cor 5:17) we do not yet see God, as the same apostle says, *face to face* (1 Cor 13:12). Yet unless we love him even now, we shall never see him. **But who can love what he does not know?**⁴⁷

Knowledge is dependent on love, but love may only be present where there is knowledge. Man's problem is that he does not know God, otherwise he would be happy

⁴⁵ DT. I. 2. [11]. 72.

⁴⁶ DT. XV. 2. [10]. 402.

⁴⁷ DT. VIII. 3. [6]. 245. Emphasis added by author.

now, and in no need of what it is Augustine has set out to do.

The solution follows later in the work when Augustine says,

‘...remembering that absolutely no one can love a thing that is quite unknown, we must carefully examine what sort of love it is that the studios have, that is people who do not yet know but still desire to know...’ Augustine continues, ‘...love commonly results from hearing....When this happens love is not being aroused for something totally unknown...’⁴⁸

Augustine suggests that, as in other disciplines, one cannot love something one knows nothing about, but it is possible for one to possess a small degree of knowledge with regard to the subject, and thus to have that small bit of knowledge spark the intellect to desire to know more fully, or to understand. The reader is then reminded that ‘The more therefore the thing is known without being fully known, the more does the intelligence desire to know what remains...’.⁴⁹

If God were totally unknown, it would not be possible for Man to love Him. God then, that Man might come to know and love Him, reveals Himself by way of images, which begin very lowly, but grow in accuracy with grace. Man knows God in a small degree at first as he is presented the Trinity in the scriptures, then his understanding is refined by representations that gradually grow in accuracy.

There are three manners in which Augustine suggests that God reveals himself to Man, each more exalted than the last so that Man’s love might grow, pushing him to further knowledge. Each roughly applies to a stage in the overall movement of the *De Trinitate*. The first is the manifestation of God found in the books that make up the Old

⁴⁸ DT. X.1.[1].286.

⁴⁹ DT. X.1.[1].287.

Testament which represent clarifications of the doctrine of the Trinity, the second are the 'likenesses' found in Man, and last the *imago Dei* discovered in the mind, corresponding to the *interiora*, which represents the fullest earthly human knowledge of the divine.

C. The Theophanies.

As Augustine says above 'love results from hearing' in cases where knowledge is less than complete. Thus in order to hear about God, Augustine turns toward revelation and manifestations of God recorded in sacred history. It is in the scriptures that Man is exposed to God's revelation of Himself externally, so that he might know something about Him, and hence love Him in a degree proportional to that knowledge.

The first books of the *De Trinitate* are focussed directly on expounding the scriptural witness to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, demonstrating 'The absolute equality of the divine persons'.⁵⁰ Augustine accomplishes this task by tackling various exegetical challenges to the co-equality and co-eternity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, affirming God to be, as is taught in the scriptures, 'inseparable equality of one substance...a divine unity; and therefore there are not three gods but one God'.⁵¹

A major challenge to establishing the doctrine of the Trinity lies in scriptural passages which seem to lend themselves to interpretations which would threaten the divinity of one of the three persons of the triune God. It should be no surprise then that Augustine spends a large portion of this time securing the divinity of the Incarnate Lord, a position denied by the Arian heresy.⁵² His discussion centres around various passages

⁵⁰ Hill. (1991), 65 astutely applies this subtitle to the first book of the *De Trinitate*.

⁵¹ DT. I.2.[7].69.

⁵² Simply put, the Arians denied the divinity of Christ, suggesting that He was simply created before all ages - the first creation amongst many others rather than professing Him to be co-eternal with orthodox Christians. For a more detailed discussion of the history and theology of Arianism, see Williams (1987).

such as that in Saint John's Gospel where Christ claims that the 'Father is greater than I'.⁵³ This passage could be interpreted as lending itself to a subordinationist interpretation of the Word's relation to the Father. Adding to the confusion is Christ's claim that 'I and the Father are one'.⁵⁴ This confusion is cleared up by Augustine's explaining that they, following the pattern of the Incarnation where two natures are united in one person, represent Christ communicating in the former in the 'form of a servant', and in the later, communicating in the 'form of God'.⁵⁵ Augustine then goes on to probe the scriptural witness to the divinity of the Holy Spirit, conclusively proving his divinity as well.

Having firmly established the scriptural witness that God is Trinity through discussion of the New Testament, Augustine turns his attention to the Old Testament manifestations of God known as the theophanies. These are situations in the Old Testament when God is said to have appeared to Man in created forms - living images of God so to speak - and communicated with Man, for example God's speaking to Abraham,⁵⁶ the three men under the oak of Mambre,⁵⁷ and the burning bush.⁵⁸ He is quick to suggest that these appearances cannot jeopardize the uniqueness of the Incarnation, and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Augustine states that if,

...the Father was not sometimes said to have been sent, if he was signified by those bodily manifestations which were shown to the eyes of men in the Old Testament. If

⁵³ Jn 14:28.

⁵⁴ Jn 10:30.

⁵⁵ DT. I.3.[14].74.

⁵⁶ Gen 12:1.

⁵⁷ Gen 18:1.

⁵⁸ Ex 3:1.

on the other hand these manifestations signified the Son, then why was he only said to have been sent *when the fullness of time came* for him to be *born of woman* (Gal 4:4)...If, finally, those Old Testament manifestations indicated neither Father nor Son but Holy Spirit, why should his being sent be confined to the New Testament, seeing that he had been previously sent in these ways in the Old?⁵⁹

Augustine reminds his reader that if the Old Testament theophanies are actual appearances of persons of the divine Trinity it would be inconsistent to make reference to the sending of the Son, or the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. In addition to the argument with regard to the proper missions of the divine persons, Augustine suggests another reason as to why the theophanies cannot be actual appearances of one of the persons of the Trinity, as some earlier Fathers of the Church have held.⁶⁰ Here Augustine draws a distinction between situations where the scriptures say ‘there appeared to me’ and ‘I saw’.⁶¹ In cases when ‘I saw’ is recorded, as in the case of the theophanies, it signifies that the manifestation is beheld by physical sight. God cannot be beheld by physical sight because the ontological gap between creator and creature is far too large (keeping in mind that these events occur prior to the Incarnation), the vision is too overwhelming. Augustine suggests that passages describing visions where a writer claims to have seen God by physical sight must be visions created by creatures, rendering them a sight suitable to the beholder. It is therefore suggested that the theophanies are the work of the angels. Augustine says,

⁵⁹ DT. III.1.[3].129.

⁶⁰ See for example Saint Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, (LIX. 226.) where he claims that it is in some cases the Eternal Word, sometimes the Holy Spirit who is responsible for the theophanies. He says, ‘Permit me, further, to show you from the book of Exodus how this same one, who is both Angel, and God, and Lord, and man, and who appeared in human form to Abraham and Isaac, appeared in a flame of fire from the bush, and conversed with Moses’.

⁶¹ DT. II.2.[11].105.

...whenever God was said to appear to our ancestors before our saviour's incarnation , the voices heard and the physical manifestations seen were the work of the angels. They either spoke and did things themselves, representing God's person...to present us with symbolic representations of God.⁶²

While the Trinity itself was not present in the theophanies, it was at the behest of God that the angels performed their function as messengers, and thus revealed God in symbols.

Although it is the Trinitarian God that is represented in the theophanies,⁶³ the Trinity could not be clearly understood until its full revelation in the Incarnation. It is in the manner of looking back upon the theophanies that we see dim symbols of the triune God. These symbolic manifestations (combined with New Testament exegesis), produced by the scriptures and received by faith externally, are enough to spark a knowledge of God in Man so that Man may love Him, and hence desire to know Him more deeply.

The level of knowledge produced in Man by his external appropriation of the doctrine of the Trinity is very shallow and lacking in understanding. It has however fulfilled its purpose, which is to give Man some scant knowledge of God so that he may have an object for his love, and hence allow that love to push his knowledge deeper, that somehow Man might see God 'face to face'.⁶⁴ As Augustine says, 'Let us therefore so look as men who are going to find, and so find as men who are going to go on

⁶² DT. III.4.[27].144.

⁶³ See, for example, Augustine's treatment of the three angelic visitors at DT. II. 4. [19]. 111. On this occasion 'Abraham saw three men, whom he invited in and entertained to a meal. Scripture, however, does not begin the description by saying 'Three men appeared to him,' but by saying 'The Lord appeared to him.'

⁶⁴ 1 Cor 13:12.

looking.’⁶⁵

While the theophanies are integral to the Augustinian system, it is important to keep their role in perspective. The manifestations of God from the Old Testament fulfill a specific purpose: to clarify and solidify the doctrine of the Trinity in the minds of the faithful so that Man can make the move from *exteriora* to *interiora*. The theophanies are external manifestations of God, however they fall outside the Augustinian category of images, as will be demonstrated.

D. Likeness.

Augustine, along with most of the authors within the Christian tradition, admits that every element of creation bears a likeness to that which created it. In Book XII he states, ‘Furthermore it is to the likeness of things up there that all the different kinds of things in this lower creation were made, even though the likeness is a very remote one.’⁶⁶ It should not be thought unusual then that in Book IV of the *De Trinitate* Augustine spends a great deal of time on something seemingly as mundane as numerology within the scriptures. His basic point being that in the interactions between God and Man as recorded in sacred history there are inevitably traces, even in the seemingly least important details, which declare the immanence of the Trinity in the affairs of the world.⁶⁷ It is not these ‘likenesses’, however, which are Augustine’s main concern.

There is one way to the knowledge of God that Augustine suggests takes precedent over all others. This way emerges out of his exegesis of Genesis 1:26 which reads, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’. With regard to this Augustine

⁶⁵ DT. IX. Pro. [1]. 271.

⁶⁶ DT. XII.2.[5].324.

⁶⁷ See especially chapters one and two of Book IV.

says:

‘Let us make’ and ‘our’ are in the plural, and must be understood in terms of relationships. For he did not mean that gods should do the making, or do it to the image and likeness of gods, but that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit should do it; do it therefore to the image of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, so that man might subsist as the image of God; and God is three.⁶⁸

On the basis of this revelation, that Man is made in the image of the Trinity, Augustine argues that it is through the image that Man will ultimately learn the most about the Trinity. ‘Trinities’ exist everywhere and in many ways, however those which actually teach the most about God are those which God has revealed to be the closest approximations of Himself, and Augustine argues that it has been revealed that the closest approximation is within Man. Augustine has discovered the outline of the Trinity presented in scripture, then he discovered where to look for it, all that is left is the searching.

In passing it is important to take note of the relation of this point to the earlier discussion of Plotinus. Just as in the work of Plotinus, the body finds its return to the One through the soul, which is imprinted with the image of the entire *cosmos*, so too does Augustine find Man’s return to God through the soul which is imprinted with the divine image.

It is true, however, that not every discernable ‘trinity’ involving Man will be the image of God. Augustine recognized that Man is divided into two sections, first an ‘outer man’ which consists of the portions of Man that are concerned with the senses,

⁶⁸

DT. VII.4.[12].231.

and second, there is an 'inner man' which is concerned with the things of the mind.⁶⁹

Within the 'outer man', Augustine notes various 'trinities'. First he examines the possibility of the trinitarian image existing within what might be called the 'familial trinity'.⁷⁰ One could suggest that the family provides an image of the Trinity within the life of Man. In the familial situation there is a husband, a wife and, produced out of the love of one for the other, a child which taken all together roughly represent the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Augustine, however, suggests that there are various things fundamentally wrong with this model which support the fact that 'the divine scripture shows quite clearly that it is false.'⁷¹ Augustine reminds his readers of the now familiar interpretation of Genesis 1:26: that the plurals indicate Man's being made in the image of the Trinity. Man is already said to be made in the image of God when Adam alone is present. This 'familial trinity' requires belief that it is not the individual which is made in the image of the Trinity, but rather that it is only in family groupings that Man shows forth this image. The 'familial trinity' requires that specific people are made in the image of individual persons in the Trinity, ie. Father-Father, Son-Wife, Spirit-Child.⁷² The family does without a doubt possess a likeness to the Trinity, as does all creation, however it is not consistent with the revealed notion of the image in Man as Augustine

⁶⁹ DT. XI.Pro.[1].303.

⁷⁰ Amongst some modern schools of theology, the 'social trinitarian' model has developed a large following despite Augustine's warnings. For a modern articulation of this position, see Farrer (1964) 49-51.

⁷¹ DT. XII.2.[6].325.

⁷² It is within the context of this conversation that Augustine also raises the issue of those who claim that Man is made in the image of the Son. (DT. XII.2.[7].325.) As with the situation mentioned above, Augustine is critical of this interpretation for the same reasons as above, ie. that the scriptures seem plain when in Genesis 1:26 plurals are used. Augustine suggests that if it were the case that Man was to be made in the Son's image, the narrative of Genesis might read, 'Let us make man to your image and likeness' instead of saying 'our'. This discussion will be taken up in Chapter Five.

interprets it.⁷³

Also, in terms of ‘trinities’ of the ‘outer man’, in his re-reading of the eighth book of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine suggests that a likeness begins to come out of the notion that ‘God is love’.⁷⁴ In his summary of Book VIII, Augustine writes that ‘when we came to charity, which is called God in holy scripture, the glimmerings of a trinity began to appear, namely lover and what is loved and love.’⁷⁵

While the two previous examples are without a doubt likenesses, they cannot be qualified as the highest likeness that is being searched for. It is not enough that the image simply involve Man. Amongst other deficiencies, these examples ignore, first, that the image must be within each Man, and second, that it must be in Man’s highest part. God is ‘that which nothing greater can be conceived’,⁷⁶ and therefore, it must be that the image involves that highest part of Man: the rational mind.⁷⁷

Turning to the mind, Augustine identifies several ‘likenesses’ of the Trinity. The first of which consists in, first, ‘the thing we see’, second, ‘the actual sight or vision’, and third, ‘there is what holds the sense of the eyes on the thing being seen as long as it is being seen’.⁷⁸ Although this ‘trinity’ stands in some relation to the human mind, Augustine still notes various problems with its being the actual created image of God in Man. In comparison to the actual Trinity, in which there subsist three persons of

⁷³ Augustine also notes various other difficulties pertaining to the ‘familial trinity’ being an appropriate likeness at DT. XII.2.[5].324.

⁷⁴ 1 John 4:16.

⁷⁵ DT. XV.2.[10].402.

⁷⁶ I borrowed this description of God (roughly) from Saint Anselm’s work the *Proslogion*.

⁷⁷ DT. IX. 3. [17].281., and XIV.3.[11].379. In the later Augustine says, ‘For although the human mind is not of the same nature as God, still the image of that nature than which no nature is better is to be sought and found in that part of us than which our nature also has nothing better.’

⁷⁸ DT. XI.1[2].304.

one substance, there are three entirely unique substances noted here.⁷⁹ ‘The first of them, the visible body, is of quite another nature from the sense of the eyes...and also from the actual sight itself’.⁸⁰ The distinctions of the actual Trinity exist only according to what is proper to each, ie, Fatherhood, Sonship or begottenness, and Holy Spirit or procession.⁸¹

Seeing deficiency in this ‘trinity’ Augustine tries again, this time looking to a more inward example. He then suggests ‘memory and internal sight and the will which couples them together’.⁸² This likeness is in reality no less reliant on the external than the previous example as ‘absent bodies are thought about’ instead of being present.⁸³ This likeness still sets man’s sight far too low, he has not yet moved wholly into the mind.

Even with this notion of the image being vested in the rational mind discovered, it is clear that the answer is not obvious, as demonstrated by the attempts to search out the image above. Although discussion has moved to the mind Augustine hasn’t yet escaped the distinction between, the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ man. Augustine defines the two in Book XII as follows:

Anything in our consciousness that we have in common with the animals is rightly said to be still part of the outer man. It is not just the body alone that is to be reckoned as the outer man, but the body with its own kind of life attached, which quickens the body’s structure and all the senses that it is equipped with in order to sense things

⁷⁹ Sullivan (1963), 93 suggests that this issue is not overcome in any of the models until the psychological trinity which is the image.

⁸⁰ DT. XI.1[2].304.

⁸¹ In Augustine’s words, what is predicated of each ‘relationship-wise’. See DT. VII.217-232.

⁸² DT. XI.2.[6].308.

⁸³ DT. XI.2.[6].308.

outside.⁸⁴

Based on this argument, the first two ‘trinities’ spoken of above obviously belong to the ‘outer man’, because they rely solely on changeable, material and external things. The next two ‘trinities’ fare no better as, while they avoid the treatment of Man as body, they still rely on information gathered by the lower parts of man’s nature, i.e., in the senses. Augustine says, ‘when the images of things sensed that are fixed in the memory are looked over again in recollection, it is still something belonging to the outer man that is being done.’⁸⁵

In order to discover the image then, Man must isolate the mind by ‘draw[ing] off all things it has added to itself,’ recognizing that the created image it strives for, and is dependant upon for knowledge of his benevolent creator, is going to come from knowing the mind itself, apart from externals.⁸⁶ This realization alone, however, does not secure certain recognition of the created image and further exploration is required, although Augustine does suggest that it is a move toward the ‘inner man’.⁸⁷

When Augustine draws everything off from the mind and attempts to study its operation so as to define the mind proper, he discovers that the mind is a composite made up of; ‘retaining, contemplating and loving’, or the more familiar memory, understanding, and will.⁸⁸ With this discovery, Augustine is left to discern the appropriate object of the mind in order to discover the proper created image.

First, it is suggested that the three functions of the mind might be directed

⁸⁴ DT. XII.1.[1].322.

⁸⁵ DT. XII.1.[1].322.

⁸⁶ DT. X.3.[11].295.

⁸⁷ DT. XIV.1.[4].375.

⁸⁸ DT. XIV.1.[4].372.

towards faith. Faith, however cannot be the object of the mind so that it is in the closest possible imitation of the Trinity because faith itself is something temporal and not eternal. The memory, understanding and will 'trinity' focussed on faith does not,

...deserve to be called the image of God, even though he [the man living in faith] is living according to the inner man; otherwise we would appear to be setting up this image in temporal things, although it should only be set up in things eternal. Clearly, when the human mind sees the faith with which it believes what it does not see, it is not seeing something everlasting. It will not always exist when this sojourn abroad comes to an end in which we are living away from the Lord so that we have to walk by faith, and when the sight by which we shall see face to face takes its place.⁸⁹

Augustine's point is that for the created image to more closely reflect that which it is the image of it must have as its focus on something unchanging.

The components of the mind which make up the created image having been properly discerned, Augustine sees no need to discard that element of his previous attempt. He suggest that what remains to be discovered is the proper focus of these three functions. Faith has been attempted and it failed, so attention is now turned towards the mind, remembering, understanding, and willing itself. In other words, the mind with itself as its object.⁹⁰ This 'trinity' also fails in its attempt to be considered the created image of God in Man for one simple reason above all others. Augustine says, 'This trinity of the mind is not really the image of God because the mind remembers and understands and loves itself, but because it is also able to remember and understand and

⁸⁹ DT. XIV.1.[4].372.

⁹⁰ DT. XIV.2.[8].376.

love him by whom it was made.’⁹¹ As mentioned above, in order for the created image to best reflect ‘the most high God’, it must be located in Man’s highest possible faculty and trained on its highest possible object in order for there to be a congruity between the image and the archetype worthy of the name image, rather than simply being called a likeness.

The group of likenesses produced in the search for the image of God in Man are criticized on three general levels. There are three criticisms which generally separate these likeness from achieving the proper title of image. First, each has its own very specific problems, usually related to the manner in which the likeness represents the Trinity.⁹² Second, they are often excluded because they do not represent the apex of the soul, or man’s highest part. Third and finally, as indicated by the fact that the eliminated likenesses are not the apex of the human soul, it means that they also are lacking in another important aspect of Augustine’s requirements for consideration as an image. They cannot possibly adhere to the notion of derivation, inherited from Plotinus’ view of image where the lower *hypostases* are images of those which precede them, a point so important to Augustine.⁹³

As John Edward Sullivan points out in his book *The Image of God*, Augustine had developed a very structured idea of the difference between image and likeness by the time that he wrote the *De Trinitate*. The idea is summarised thus, ‘Things can be similar to one another, and to the point of full equality, but if one does not derive its

⁹¹ DT. XIV.4.[15].383.

⁹² Ladner (1959), 213. Reminds his readers that the vestiges are not just simply any three things coupled together, but rather that each must seek to represent the persons and unity of the Trinity. It is precisely on this point that some of the vestiges fail, for instance they may be three, but are not in any real sense one, etc.

⁹³ For a summary of the interrelationship between Augustine and Plotinus on the concept of derivation and its relationship to the definition of image see Sullivan (1963), 3-25.

similarity from the other, there is no imaging involved.’⁹⁴ To be an image requires more than just looking like the thing being imaged in this account. To be an image requires that the image immediately comes from (is derived from) the thing imaged. Images, then, can exist on a scale of likeness; there are those which are derived from their archetype but are not like the thing they are imaging, and there are those which are derived from their archetype which are exactly like their archetype, it is a sliding scale. In Augustine’s system there are likenesses which are analogous to the things they seek to represent, then there are those things which are images, likenesses which no matter how like or not like they are receive the title of image so long as they are derived from their archetype.

The vestiges of the Augustinian text cannot be given the title of image because their place on the cosmological scale is separated from God by many layers. An immediate tendency toward God is found only in the apex of the human soul, where nothing stands between it and its creator, a fact which indicated derivation. Due to this immediate proximity the apex of the human soul is rightly considered the image of God surpassing all the likenesses.⁹⁵

This is not to suggest that Man is an image of perfect equality. This is a position reserved for the Son of God alone, he is the only image which does not depart in likeness. See for example Augustine’s comment in Book IX where he suggests that the image in Man is a ‘disparate image, yet image none the less,’⁹⁶ or again in Book X where he says that ‘the human mind is the unequal image [of God], but the image none

⁹⁴ Sullivan (1963), 15.

⁹⁵ Sullivan (1963), 19-20.

⁹⁶ DT. IX. 1. [2]. 271.

the less.’⁹⁷

E. Image of God.

In Book VII Augustine writes, ‘For we too are in the image of God, though not the equal one like him [the Son]; we are made by the Father through the Son, not born of the Father like that image...it [the Son] is the same thing as he is from whom it gets its being.’⁹⁸ Augustine admits that there is a created image of God within Man, however he is unwilling to let that image stand as being in the same proximity to God as the most true image, which is the Son. That being said, both are clearly referred to as images of God according to Augustinian standards, the difference being that the image in Man departs from God in the category of likeness, while the Son as image of the Father does not. It is important to note that ‘the image of God will achieve its full likeness of him when it attains to the full vision of him...’.⁹⁹ This likeness, however, even at its fullest capacity will still ultimately be unlike the archetype. This position taken by Augustine presents much of interest for discussion and will find its way into the discussion of both Chapters Five and Six.

In the account given above by Saint Augustine the general concept of image this study began with is further defined so that, upon closer examination, it is shown to break down into two categories. At one level there are analogies, or likenesses - things like the *vestigia*, which while they do draw near to God in likeness cannot properly be called images. The images are a more specific category, while images are likenesses, there is something more to them than simply that. Images partake of the above described notion of derivation - for an image to exist it must be the result of the

⁹⁷ DT. X. 4. [19]. 299.

⁹⁸ DT. VII.2.[5].223.

⁹⁹ DT. XVI.5.[24].390.

production by its archetype. With this definition Augustine presents us with two images, the image of God in Man and the Image of God, that is to say God the Son who is the perfect image of the Father. Both are images in the Augustinian account, however the Son approaches God in perfect likeness, while Man cannot be said to share that distinction. The next chapter will endeavour to see if the same categories are discernable in the Dionysian *Corpus*.

*Chapter Two:
Image and Analogy in the Dionysian Corpus.*

A. The Movement of the Dionysian Corpus.

As it was discovered that the general category of ‘image’ breaks down into more subtle distinctions (ie., image and likeness/analogy) within the *De Trinitate* of Augustine, so to will the study of the Dionysian *Corpus* produce qualifications and categories when dealing with the same subject. Like in the case of Augustine, it is only in understanding the movement of the texts that these distinctions clearly emerge, therefore our study must begin there.

As stated above in the biographical discussion of Dionysius, there has always been a great deal of ambiguity surrounding the history of *The Divine Names*, *The Mystical Theology*, *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, as well as the nine letters which make up the Dionysian *Corpus*. Due to this lack of information surrounding its origins, determining the logic which draws the treatises together has proved a difficult task, in fact many scholars have made attempts to discern a system but concluded with limited success.¹⁰⁰ One scholar in particular, however, has proposed a system which seems eminently sensible, and has met with a positive response from other scholars. The articulation of the movement of the *Corpus* is highly indebted to the work of Paul Rorem who has reconstructed the order of the texts with much care, and has presented his work on the subject through an article entitled ‘The Place of the Mystical Theology in the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus’, and two books, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, and *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence*. Thus, the next section

¹⁰⁰ See Rorem (1984), 7-8 for a summary of other attempts to discern the proper ordering of the Dionysian texts.

of this paper will be much indebted to his work.

According to Rorem, the Dionysian system begins where most theological systems begin: with God. In his own words, Dionysius suggests that (opening with a quote from the Epistle of Saint James 1:17),

*'Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...Inspired by the Father, each procession of the Light spreads itself generously towards us, and in its power to unify, it stirs us by lifting us up. It returns us back to the oneness and deifying simplicity of the Father who gathers us in. For, as the sacred word says, from him and to him are all things.'*¹⁰¹

Here, laid out in summary form, is the Dionysian *Corpus*.

The Dionysian system begins with, as described above, a generous giving forth of Light from the Father of Lights. The proceeding Man described is not an act of creation but rather describes the process of God's self-revelation. This revelation is not given directly to Man, as 'the things of God are revealed to each mind in proportion to its capacities.'¹⁰² Instead it is diffused down to Man from God via the angelic hierarchy. In chapter six of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius describes the process through which this Light must pass, through the nine-fold order of Angels, until it arrives at first contact with Man in the form of the prophets and the evangelists, or, as Dionysius calls them, the theologians. In turn the theologians commit the divine Light, as received by them, to paper in the form of the scriptures.

Within the scriptures, Dionysius notes two different kinds of images applied to God. At one level, there are the like images, on the other there are the unlike images.

¹⁰¹ CH 1. [1]. 145. All future citations will follow this pattern; The abbreviation of the appropriate text. Chapter number. [paragraph number]. Page number.

¹⁰² DN 1. [1]. 49.

Dionysius contends,

Now there are two reasons for creating types for the typeless, for giving shape to what is actually without shape. First, we lack the ability to be directly raised up to conceptual contemplations...Second, it is most fitting to the mysterious passages of Scripture that the sacred and hidden truth about the celestial intelligences be concealed through the inexpressible and the sacred and be inaccessible to the *hoi polloi*. Not everyone is sacred, and, as scripture says, knowledge is not for everyone.¹⁰³

Man begins his return to God through the unlike images which are the lowest diffusion of the divine Light,¹⁰⁴ whose purpose it is to force Man into interpretation of the images. They are so ridiculous that Man normally would not allow his understanding of God to rest on them. They make use of Man's 'inherent tendency toward the material' to draw him in and begin the process.¹⁰⁵ As is pointed out correctly by Rorem, the scriptures (in the context of the Liturgy) are elements of the divine procession and it is their interpretation which begins the return.¹⁰⁶ These images carry the divine Light and are most likely to spark interpretation. They represent a concession to human frailty.

The divine Light, having finally reached Man, allows him to be drawn into his proper place within his own hierarchy. One sees this played out especially in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* where Man's return is furthered through involvement in the liturgy. Dionysius has moved Man well beyond the unlike images, into the liturgy where no longer are the Scriptures read, but the initiated hear them. They are still corporeal, bound by words, however, they are now more immaterial, having been freed

¹⁰³ CH 2. [3]. 149.

¹⁰⁴ Rorem (1984), 84.

¹⁰⁵ CH 2. [3]. 150.

¹⁰⁶ Rorem (1984), 63.

from writing on a page.¹⁰⁷ It is within the context of the Liturgy that the scriptures are presented to Man so that they may be interpreted. Dionysius describes this process using the image of a Man pulling on a chain. The Man thinks he is pulling his target towards him, when in fact it is the target pulling him in.¹⁰⁸ Fr. Andrew Louth points out in *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* that it is important not to think of this process as climbing a ladder to God, as Man is already in direct union with God through love. It is better to be thought of as a movement inward, a deepening of the knowledge and love of God at each stage of the journey.¹⁰⁹

Having things take their proper places within the hierarchy is important for Dionysius as ‘Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God...’.¹¹⁰ With each member of the *cosmos* finding its appropriate place within the hierarchies allows an image of God emerge at the cosmological level. It is an expression of an all-powerful creator in His creation, not just in each individual member, but in all creation functioning as it should.

Rorem, then, places the entire *Corpus* within the context of procession and return. The divine Man, the means of Man’s knowing God, is given to creation by the Divinity. This Man, however is too bright for Man and must be filtered so as to be able to be received by the lower levels within the hierarchy. Light is given to each level according to its capacity, until finally reaching Man. Man receives it and, by interpreting the various levels of imagery, is gradually drawn into his proper relationship with God so that, with the fallen link restored (Man), the whole *cosmos* may show forth

¹⁰⁷ EH. 1. [4]. 199.

¹⁰⁸ DN. 3. [1]. 68.

¹⁰⁹ Louth (1981), 177.

¹¹⁰ CH. 3. [2]. 154.

a God-like unity.

B. What is an Image?

Having seen the placement and basic role of images within the Dionysian text one is now free to explore the intricacies of their content. In his treatise, *The Divine Names*, Dionysius presents his reader with a discussion of the symbolic nature of language. It is here that the reader can see his theology of image begin to take shape. He states;

Let no one imagine that in giving status to the term 'yearning' I am running counter to scripture. In my opinion, it would be unreasonable and silly to look at words rather than the power of their meanings. Anyone seeking to understand the divine things should never do this, for it is the procedure followed by those who do not allow empty sounds to pass beyond their ears, who shut them out because they do not wish to know what a particular phrase means or how to convey its sense through equivalent but more effective phrases. People like this are concerned with meaningless letters and lines, with syllables and phrases which they do not understand, which do not get as far as the thinking part of their souls, and which make empty sounds on their lips and in their hearing.¹¹¹

Later in the same paragraph, he continues, 'The truth we have to understand is that we use letters, syllables, phrases, written terms and words because of the senses.'¹¹²

Above, Dionysius asserts that words, spoken or written, have a symbolical function, signifying a deeper truth than what the individual letters or phases present on the surface. In the aforementioned discussion, he is warning those who would chastize him for using the term 'yearning' as opposed to a word more prevalent in the scriptures.

¹¹¹ DN. 4. [11]. 80.

¹¹² DN. 4.[11].80.

The reason he feels confident in doing this is that he believes there to be a more transcendent meaning which articulated language calls to our attention. The word itself cannot become a barrier to the more exalted meaning which lies behind it, hence the warning against being caught on 'meaningless lines'. The last sentence quoted reminds us that letters are there to appeal to the senses, and not as a full expression of the true spiritual idea. An idea lies behind each symbolic word, and each symbolic word is there to appeal to the senses.

This discussion points us to a generally acceptable definition of image with regard to the Dionysian *Corpus*. Images are outward symbols of transcendent and immaterial truths, as Dionysius articulates in *The Celestial Hierarchy* by stating that, 'appearances of beauty are signs of invisible loveliness'.¹¹³ This basic definition will take on many qualifications as this paper proceeds, however for the moment it will suffice. Questions will arise for instance with regard to the proper relationship between image and the archetype, which is not so apparent with the linguistic example where words do not bear any necessary similarity to that which they signify as for instance a stick drawing of a bird might to an actual bird.

Using the same principal definition, one finds image existing at various levels of the works in question. Dionysius uses many images, physical descriptions, to help explain the complex ideas involved in studying his work. For instance, he uses the image of a stamp in wax to help describe how the divine unity can interact with created multiplicity without compromise,¹¹⁴ as mentioned above, he turns to the image of chain tied to a rock with a man in a boat pulling on it to relay to the reader the idea that though

¹¹³ CH. 1. [3]. 146

¹¹⁴ DN. 2. [4]. 62.

it may seem that Man is returning himself to God, it is in fact the other way around.¹¹⁵

He uses a series of spiral and circular movements to describe the movements of the angels and the human souls with regard to God.¹¹⁶ In addition one finds the image of a runner running a race,¹¹⁷ and a sculptor sculpting a block of marble.¹¹⁸ Perhaps most interesting of all, running in the background of all these images is the fact that Dionysius writes using a pseudonym, a fact which will be discussed later in this chapter.¹¹⁹

C. The Use of Images.

Images have a largely pedagogical usage in the Dionysian system. They seek to represent spiritual truths in corporeal forms, following the principle of the Incarnation in which God takes humanity to himself. All images ultimately serve the purpose of aiding Man in coming to knowledge of God that, by knowledge, creation may be drawn into unity with its creator. The images are the result of the pouring forth of the divine Light as described above, which makes Man's return to God possible. Again, it is important to remember that the procession and return model of the Dionysian works is relegated to the level of subjective epistemology, and not at the level of objective ontology; it is about creation finding its way home, it is not describing a mode or method of creation.¹²⁰ Hence, as Dionysius points out, the grounds for the procession of divine

¹¹⁵ DN. 3. [1]. 68.

¹¹⁶ DN. 4. [8-9]. 78.

¹¹⁷ DN. 8. [6]. 112.

¹¹⁸ MT. 2. [1]. 138.

¹¹⁹ Cross reference to later section.

¹²⁰ This movement from ontological to epistemological is important to take note of as it makes it clear that Dionysius is not an emanationist like his Neoplatonist influences. Emanationist authors such as Proclus believed that procession and return occurs on an ontological level. That is to say that what proceeds from God, or the One, is 'Being' itself, bringing subsequent levels of the *cosmos* into existence. In the Dionysian account, creation is *ex nihilo* - God

Light into the images is the work of God on the Cross, where our right to this saving restorative grace is won for us. God is called, 'loving towards humanity, because in one of its persons it accepted a true share of what it is we are, and thereby issued a call to Man's lowly state to raise it up.'¹²¹ These images then contain divine content which God desired to be communicated to Man in order that fallen humanity may be restored to his proper place in the *cosmos*. It is a communication which humankind has no grounds to ask for apart from the Incarnation and sacrifice of Christ.

The divine Light, which is the generous procession of a benevolent God, is not fit to be received by every level of creation in the same share, so it is the duty of the various levels of the created hierarchy to grade the Man so that it is in a form which may be received by the rank underneath itself. For instance, the angels, and more specifically the Seraphim, receive the divine Light directly from God. Their closest neighbour in the hierarchy are the Cherubim, who are of a different and lower order, therefore for the Light to be effectively transmitted from higher to lower order it must be tailored to a level which the lower order is capable of receiving.

The Dionysian theology of image, cannot be separated from a study of Man. As stated above, images are the result of God's desiring to restore unity to the created hierarchy. This original unity has been rejected by Man who fell out of his proper place within the hierarchy by sin. If the Divine Man which calls all creation into unity is passed from higher ranks to lower, as demonstrated above, then should one link in the chain fall out, it not only affects the link that rejected goodness itself, but also those

creates each thing individually, holding each in his will. Procession is, as described above, a divine Man, it is God's way of presenting himself to things already created, and calling them back to himself in knowledge and love. He is thoroughly Christian on this account. See Rorem (1984), 60.

¹²¹ DN. 1. [2]. 51-52.

below which depended on the superior order for transmission. A restoration of Man to obedience is necessary to effect a restoration to unity of the Dionysian *cosmos*, hence the ultimate target of the Man God has offered is Man.

D. 'Incongruous Dissimilarities'.¹²²

The restoration of Man is wrought through the use of images. The divine Man is passed down through the ranks of angels, through the theologians,¹²³ poured out into the scriptures, and presented by 'our hierarchy'.¹²⁴ Here, as *The Divine Names* and *The Celestial Hierarchy* explain, the divine Light finds the shape of what are referred to as 'incongruous dissimilarities', which represent the lowest point on the Dionysian scale of imagery. In an attempt to demonstrate the importance of beginning here Dionysius asks,

What if someone therefore thinks that the spiritual imagery for these minds is incongruous and that the names given to the angels have the inadequacy of a pretense? Indeed, it could be argued that if the theologians wanted to give corporeal form to what is purely incorporeal, they should have resorted to a more appropriate and related fashioning, that they should have begun with what we would hold to be noblest, immaterial and transcendent beings, instead of drawing upon a multiplicity of the earthliest forms and applying these to Godlike realities which are utterly simple and heavenly.¹²⁵

Here, Dionysius anticipates his critics who might inquire as to why the scripture writers choose to represent something as exalted and incorporeal as God, or even the angels for

¹²² Although in this section the argument is largely taken from *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius himself suggests that what is said of the angels, may also be said of God. See CH. 2. [5].152.

¹²³ Rorem (1984), 18.suggests that Dionysius calls the scripture writers the 'theologians'.

¹²⁴ Dionysius never uses the designation 'Ecclesiastical Hierarchy' as the treatise's editor has entitled it. He prefers the name 'our hierarchy'.

¹²⁵ CH. 2. [2]. 148.

that matter, as ‘great moos’, instead of using more exalted images, like conceptual names (i.e., ‘Being’ or ‘Good’).¹²⁶

In his response to the issue raised, Dionysius reminds his reader that there are three reasons for taking the approach that he has presented. First,

...we should set down the truth “not in the plausible words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the power granted by the Spirit” to the scripture writers, a power by which, in a manner surpassing speech and knowledge, we reach a union superior to anything available to us by way of our own abilities or activities in the realm of discourse or intellect.’¹²⁷

Here the reader is presented with the argument for the honour due to the scriptures - an argument from authority whereby images are said to be respected because they are revealed by God and therefore must be appropriate. Following this basic reason, Dionysius grants his readers a more detailed response. He states that ‘there are two reason for creating types for the typeless, for giving shape to what is actually without shape.’¹²⁸ They are , first, that ‘we lack the ability to be directly raised up to conceptual contemplations,’ and second, that ‘it is most fitting to the mysterious passages of scripture that the sacred and hidden truth about the celestial intelligences be concealed through the inexpressible and be inaccessible to the *hoi polloi*.’¹²⁹

The incongruous dissimilarities have the distinction of being the starting point for man’s return to his proper place within the hierarchy, and hence into God so long as

¹²⁶ CH. 2. [2]. 148.

¹²⁷ DN. 1. [1]. 49.

¹²⁸ CH. 2. [2]. 149.

¹²⁹ CH. 2. [2]. 149.

the interpreter does not fall into the trap with those who, ‘get caught up with the things of the world, who imagine that there is nothing beyond instances of individual being...’¹³⁰ The unlike images force humanity into the proverbial corner. Dionysius states, ‘I doubt that anyone would refuse to acknowledge that incongruities are more suitable for lifting our minds up into the domain of the spiritual than similarities are.’¹³¹ This is because unlike images force Man into making a decision. They are so unlike the things which they seek to represent that Man is literally forced to realize that they are images which require interpretation in order to expose more transcendent truth. Take for instance representing God as fire. It is much more obvious that God is not fire than that he is not ‘Good’.¹³² Due to Man’s ‘laziness’, it is much harder for him to recognize the image as an image - a limited representation - at the conceptual level than it is to recognize it at the level of the unlike images. Using the discussion of language above, the unlike images are medicine to prevent one from being trapped at the level of the written word, ignoring the concept that it wishes to call attention to.

It is interesting to note that it appears to be along this principle that Dionysius operates under the guise of a pseudonym.¹³³ The idea of writing under a pseudonym has historically been treated with a fair bit of skepticism, and in fact it is often seen as a sort of malicious and subversive, or at least dishonest, attempt by an author to steal the reverence due to the authority he is posing as. This, however, is not the only possible

¹³⁰ MT. 1. [2]. 136.

¹³¹ CH. 2. [3].150.

¹³² This ‘negative way’ is throughout the entire Dionysian *Corpus* and has a great impact on the content of the images. The denial of the adequacy of the ‘incongruous similarities’ is applied to the score of the Dionysian images, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹³³ Louth (1989), 7-10 gives another, perhaps more likely explanation of the pseudonym. He suggests that the 6th Century was a time of hearkening back. It was a time of recalling the council of Nicea and reaffirming its decisions. Louth suggests that Dionysius is simply getting on this historical train.

motivation for using a pseudonym. It is in the context of a discussion of imagery within the Dionysian *Corpus* that another possible motivation appears. It should be noted that the early Church had always been very aware of Apostolic lineage and the relationships between various Fathers of the Church and those whom they taught, so when Dionysius cites the works of Saint Ignatius he is jeopardizing his pseudonym, as the author of the footnotes to the Paulist Press edition of *Pseudo-Dionysius: Complete Works* rightfully recognizes.¹³⁴ It is the same situation when the *Corpus*' author cites Saint Clement, either of Rome, or Alexandria - although likely the later as it is Clement of Alexandria who gained renown as a philosopher.¹³⁵

It seems at least possible that what Dionysius is actually doing is using the principles of imagery set up throughout his own text, and applying them to the text itself. Reading the text *prima facie*, one encounters an elaborate depiction of the student of Saint Paul, Dionysius the Areopagite. There are references to his supposed teacher Saint Paul, as well as a host of other characters, such as Saint Timothy, who is the supposed recipient of the *The Divine Names*. Another teacher, Hierotheus, is credited. As well there are a series of nine letters sent to various others, such as the monk Gaius, the deacon Dorotheus, the priest Sosipater, and Polycarp the hierarch. A very elaborate story, which on the surface appears credible. However, one suspects that it might have been possible for the readers in the early centuries of the Church to have thought differently. They might have noticed the problem of dating Dionysius and Clement as contemporary, the same goes for Ignatius. It would seem possible then that Dionysius is using his own theory of unlike images to draw people on to greater truth, the tradition of

¹³⁴ This is found on p.81 of the Paulist Press edition of the *corpus* in footnote number 153. The same observation is noted in Saffrey (1982), 67.

¹³⁵ See p.102 of the Paulist Press edition of the *Corpus* in footnote number 186.

the Church he claims to be reserved for the initiated.¹³⁶ The story draws one in, and the subtle inconsistencies force one to look past the elaborate story. There is an image created by the author, made to have oddities enough that the careful reader would notice, and the lazy would not.¹³⁷

The second of the final two reasons given in support of the incongruous dissimilarities, is that the 'hidden truth' might remain 'inaccessible to the *hoi polloi*'. It is a protective measure. By coaching the entry point to divine illumination in seemingly foolish symbols it is likely that only those who are most serious would bother taking them seriously.

In taking this position, suggesting that it is external images which lead Man into reunion with God, Dionysius follows the positions of Neoplatonist of the school of Iamblichus and Proclus. Both of these Neoplatonists suggest that the relationship between the One and the material realm is completely severed, and therefore return requires an outpouring of communication from God as there is no remnant of the divine left in the soul. Dionysius suggests that return requires the divine Man poured out in the images, the return is rendered through external things, unlike Augustine who suggested that the soul existed in a relationship to the Divine that allowed God to be thought about through it.

E. Conceptual Names.

¹³⁶ See Chapter Three of this thesis for a discussion of Dionysius and tradition, particularly section 'D' entitled 'Exegetical Method', (60)

¹³⁷ Fr Andrew Louth has pointed out to me that this postulation is not borne out by history. He suggests that only one person seems to notice the inconsistencies raised in the footnotes of the Paulist Press edition of the works of Dionysius - it is Michael Synkellos in the 9th century. If this was Dionysius' intention it seems to have slipped many capable figures in Church history. It is quite possible that there are good explanations as to why the inconsistencies of the *Corpus* were noticed so sparingly in history. One has to remember that the obsession with authorship is a modern issue. Until recently, so long as texts represented an orthodox spirit, determining their authorship was only a marginal concern.

Once Man has been forced into the interpretation of the images, rather than resting in them, by the unlike images, he is fit to move on to the conceptual images, as articulated in the *The Divine Names*.¹³⁸ These represent the most exalted images in the scriptures, as they seem more appropriate because they, like their archetype, are incorporeal. As one might expect, there is an appropriate scale even within the conceptual names, beginning with the more lowly, such as ‘greatness’ and ‘smallness’,¹³⁹ to the higher names such as ‘Being’,¹⁴⁰ to the highest name ‘Good’, which takes into itself names like ‘beautiful’ and ‘light’.¹⁴¹ It is these conceptual names which, due to man’s laziness, necessitate the unlike images because amongst the incorporeal concepts the temptation to equate the respective image with God is great. It is easy to say ‘God is Good’, equating the two, unless one is presented with the reminder of the unlike images which seek to remind Man that he must look past them.

F. Ecclesiastical Hierarchy.

Rorem notes that within the context of the liturgies described in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, the scriptures are moved from being read by individuals, on a page in front of them, to being heard. This movement places them on a new level as images, as they become more incorporeal than they were previously, and hence, closer

¹³⁸ It might be noted that according to the system of the Dionysian *corpus*, as presented above, *The Divine Names* represents the first treatise, then *The Celestial Hierarchy*, followed by *Mystical Theology*, and concluded with *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. In the first treatise then names, in external form, descend as the divine Man descends. Its method of descent is described in the second treatise. Interpretation is presented in the third and the fourth represents the beginnings of man’s return. In content, however, the names are the highest images in the scriptures, so from man’s perspective, the content of *The Divine Names* finds a different placement.

¹³⁹ DN. 9. [1]. 115.

¹⁴⁰ DN. 5. [1]. 96.

¹⁴¹ DN. 4. [1]. 71.

to the Divine who they are attempting to communicate.¹⁴² This seems to suggest that there is a reading of scripture which takes place outside the liturgy, but that the greater reading is placed within the context of liturgical celebration where traditional interpretation is applied.¹⁴³

The system of divine images is not, however, relegated to the scriptures. The divine Light also shines out through the liturgy. 'Our hierarchy' operates with the three-fold order of three, a pattern familiar from the celestial hierarchy. There are those yet to be purified; the catechumens, the possessed, and the penitent. There are three orders of laity; those being purified, the communicants, and the Monks. Lastly, there are three orders within those who have taken Holy Orders; Deacons, the Priests and the Bishops. Each has a distinct role with regard to the liturgies, which are the context for the reception of the sacraments. The sacraments themselves are also treated as being three-fold in order, that of Baptism, *Synaxis* or the Eucharist, and anointing.

In the sacraments, Man receives the means of his highest earthly union with God, and the manner in which he is drawn to them is in the interpretation of the various rites associated with each sacrament.¹⁴⁴ This being the case, some are allowed less opportunity than others for interpretation. For instance the uninitiated, are not allowed to remain for the entire celebration of the *Synaxis*, they hear the scriptures read aloud, and then leave. Having not been completely catechized, they are not prepared to interpret the Eucharistic liturgy and be brought into union with God.

'Order and rank here below are a sign of the harmonious ordering toward the

¹⁴² Rorem (1984), 118..

¹⁴³ Further discussion of this point is found in Chapter Three of this paper (54).

¹⁴⁴ Pelikan (1971), 345-346 reminds his readers of the effect the sacraments themselves have, but he suggests that we must also remember the role of interpreting the rites associated with them which lead to their reception.

divine realm.’¹⁴⁵ From Man’s perspective then, Andrew Louth is correct to note that the ‘heart of Denys theology is liturgical’.¹⁴⁶ It is in the context of liturgy that everything comes together. Here Man is presented with the scriptural images in their highest form, the liturgical tradition and its images, as well as the means of union in the triad of sacraments.

G. Purpose of Hierarchy.

Having discussed the importance of images in drawing Man into his proper place within hierarchy - by drawing him into deeper understanding of God - attention must now be turned to the purpose of hierarchy itself. Dionysius refers to hierarchy as ‘a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible the divine.’¹⁴⁷ With each portion of creation falling into its assigned place within its own hierarchy, then having all the hierarchies functioning together in harmony, the most exalted image of God demonstrable by creation is formed. In *The Divine Names*, Dionysius explains this further stating,

We learn of all these mysteries from the divine scriptures and you will find that what the scripture writers have to say regarding the divine names refers, in revealing praises, to the beneficent processions of God. And so all these scriptural utterances celebrate the supreme Deity by describing it as a monad or henad, because of its supernatural simplicity and indivisible unity, by which unifying power we are lead to unity. We, in the diversity of what we are, are drawn together by it and are lead into a godlike oneness, into a unity reflecting God.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ CH. 1. [3]. 146.

¹⁴⁶ Louth (1989), 29.

¹⁴⁷ CH. 3. [1]. 153.

¹⁴⁸ DN. 1. [4]. 51.

Following in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius suggests that, ‘The goal of hierarchy, then, is to enable beings to be as like as far as possible to God and to be at one with him.’¹⁴⁹ Within the hierarchy, the created order continues to possess its individuality, but it is brought together in singularity of will and action, in such a way that it mirrors, or reflects, as Dionysius puts it, the Trinity and its Unity.¹⁵⁰ As God is one and yet three, creation is diversity, and yet by the grace of God is a unity together within the hierarchy. This ‘Godlike oneness’ is alluded to as the goal of hierarchy all over the Dionysian *Corpus*.¹⁵¹

H. The Image of God.

All the images discussed to this point share something in common. While they reflect the divine in a manner of speaking, they remain less than true images. In *The Divine Names*, Dionysius suggests that,

In reality there is no exact likeness between caused and cause, for the caused carry within themselves only such images of their originating sources as are possible for them, whereas the causes themselves are located in a realm transcending the caused, according to the argument regarding their source.¹⁵²

There is a distance between these images and their archetype; the images are limited to the capacity of the receiver, but also by the nature of the one passing it on, who had received it from above. Although in the previous section we have traced the text and

¹⁴⁹ CH. 3. [2]. 154.

¹⁵⁰ Louth (1981), 166. points to the Trinity as principle of unity and diversity. In the conceptual names of God, unity is presented as first name and trinity follows as the beginning of movement outward. Hierarchy reflects the Trinity in that while it is at once one, it is also multiplicity.

¹⁵¹ See the following passages: DN. 11. [2]. 122., CH. 1. [1]. 145., and EH. 1. [3]. 198.

¹⁵² DN. 2. [8]. 64.

articulated grades between images, for instance those between the like (incorporeal) and unlike (corporeal) images, the reality of the matter is that neither image is truly higher than the other, and all are subject to the negative way. Dionysius refers to all of these images as ‘analogies’.¹⁵³ Speaking of the conceptual images Dionysius says, ‘Now these sacred shapes certainly show more reverence and seem vastly superior to the making of images drawn from the world. Yet they are actually no less defective than the latter, for the Deity is far beyond every manifestation of being and life...’.¹⁵⁴

All the various grades of imagery treated to this point turn out not to be worthy of the name image. They are analogies or similitudes at best, but not images for reasons soon to be explored. Dionysius goes on to speak of the true image and defines it, over and against the analogies/similitudes, by its relationship to its archetype. The scriptures refer to the Son as the image of the Father, and it is this that Dionysius picks up on. He states, in reference to the second person of the Trinity,

And out of love he has come down to be at our level of nature and has become a being. He, the transcendent God, has taken on the name of man. (Such things, beyond mind and beyond words, we must praise with all reverence.) In all this he remains what he is - supernatural, transcendent - and he has come to join us in what we are without himself undergoing change or confusion. His fullness was unaffected by that inexpressible emptying of self, and, most novel of all amid the things of our nature he remained supernatural and amid the things of being he remained beyond being. From us he took what was of us yet he surpassed us here too.¹⁵⁵

In the Incarnation, image and archetype come together in a way that had not been

¹⁵³ DN. 1. [4]. 53.

¹⁵⁴ CH. 2. [3]. 149.

¹⁵⁵ DN. 2. [10]. 66.

witnessed before. There is a union between image and archetype which is perfect rather than simply analogous. The Eternal Son is the perfect image of the Father, and then, without 'undergoing change' that image is presented to Man.

While Man participates in the cosmological image of the unity of all creation, he is also called to be Christ-like.¹⁵⁶ This seems to be a call unique to Man and has been worked out in various ways. It is because the Image is incarnate that Man, who needs condescension to his lowly estate, is able to imitate him as part of the human task.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ DN. 1. [4]. 52.

¹⁵⁷ See authors like Duclow (1972) who suggests that Man is Christ-like because of his role in redemption through recovering his proper place within the hierarchy. Duclow suggests that Man is Christ-like because restoration is dependant on him. The divine Man is passed through each level of creation so when Man falls, the ranks below him loose their proper connection to the divine. It is in this way that nature falls with Man. By restoring Man to the hierarchy, nature again takes its proper place.

Chapter Three: Image and the Scriptures.

A. General Introduction to the Discussion Section.

In Chapters One and Two, the theology of image within Augustine's *De Trinitate* and the Dionysian *Corpus* has been presented within the context of the movement of each treatise. Having this task completed, it is now possible to place the theologies parallel to one another and enter into a comparative discussion of them, in the manner described above, freely noting both similarity and difference.

One general similarity must be noted before discussion may proceed any further. Both Augustine and Dionysius create a similar division within a more general notion of image. Through the presentation of the texts it has become clear that there is a distinction drawn between an image proper and something which possesses a certain likeness or is an analogy of its archetype. I.P. Sheldon-Williams, in one of his contributions to *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, tries to clarify this distinction between the two by applying the terms 'natural image', which denotes a causal relationship between image and archetype, and 'artificial images', which denotes simple participation of the image in the archetype.¹⁵⁸

The difference emerges surrounding the use of each level of images, natural and artificial, generally but also what things are included in which category. In various ways the remainder of this thesis is an investigation of the application of this noted distinction.

One procedural problem arises in preparation for a comparison of the two notions of image. The number of questions which arise, as well as the number of possible approaches that can be discerned out of a comparison of the issue at hand in

¹⁵⁸

See Sheldon-Williams (1967a), 506-508 for detailed explanation of these definitions.

each piece of writing, far exceed what can possibly be treated within the confines of an MA thesis. Thus, the next task becomes discerning an approach which will suit the allowable length of this paper, as well as prove useful.

The discovery of an appropriate approach for this particular paper was somewhat accidental, however it has proved both appropriate and helpful. In preparation for writing, the author noted that his research had subconsciously fallen into a particular pattern. Preparatory notes followed the movement of the *De Trinitate*. Originally, this was a source of much frustration however, with thought, it proved to be the most appropriate way to organize the discussion at hand.

As a Christian immersed in the Western tradition of theology, the author discovered how greatly his memory was affected by the thought of Augustine, so much so that it came out without intention in the research process. Thus it was decided that perhaps the best approach for one within the Western tradition to begin the process of understanding the Eastern tradition is to compare the newly discovered East to the much more comfortable West. Thus Dionysius will be discussed on Augustine's terms. Discussion will take the movement of the *De Trinitate* with its emphases, and use it as the backdrop for discussion. Reflecting this, Chapter Three will discuss the relationship between images and the scriptures, Chapter Four will discuss the *vestigia* and the Dionysian triads, and Chapters Five and Six will focus on the created image of God in Man and Christian anthropology.¹⁵⁹ These chapters roughly correspond to the *exteriora*, *interiora* elements of the movement of the *De Trinitate* discussed at length below.¹⁶⁰

It must be acknowledged that this approach to the comparison of the two texts

¹⁵⁹ More specifically, Chapter Five (76) will explore the relationship of each author to a few major figures in patristic thought on the created image of God in Man and Chapter Six (94) discuss the proximity/distance from the archetype in the account of each author.

¹⁶⁰ See the section 'A' in Chapter One of this paper entitled, 'Movement of the *De Trinitate*'. (14)

has great deficiencies. Anytime an author is compared to another and taken out of his own context, one runs the risks of losing sight of important emphases within the text which is being removed from own context. While this is true, it must also be acknowledged that in beginning the study of an author, it is useful to know where he differs from the position which is largely presupposed. In light of these facts, this paper will proceed to discussion of Augustine and Dionysius with presuppositions fully stated.

B. Introductory Remarks on the Scriptures.

Within the overall movements of the both of the texts treated, the scriptures serve very important roles. More specifically, the importance of the scriptures emerge in the context of the theology of image. Before this relationship can be explored in each author, there are some preliminary matters which must be clarified. Augustine and Dionysius firmly believe in the Church's teaching about the scriptures, being that they are the Word of God written.¹⁶¹ The scriptures are inspired by God and 'written for our learning.'¹⁶² That this is the position taken by each author is evident in many places.¹⁶³ Second, It is also important to note that there is also substantial agreement with regard to which books make up the scriptures, confirming that both share an allegiance to the formalized canon. Much work has been done recently to outline what the Augustinian and Dionysian Bibles would have looked like. In the case of Augustine, discerning which books he suggested made up the Bible is just a matter of consulting the *De*

¹⁶¹ See Rolt (1920), 40. for an argument as to the notion of inspiration spared by Augustine and Dionysius.

¹⁶² These are the words of the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent, found in the Book of Common Prayer. (Canadian Edition, 1962) 97.

¹⁶³ See for instance Augustine's position as articulated in the *De Civ. Dei*. 11.3 where he suggests that the scriptures are 'writings of outstanding authority in which we put our trust concerning those things which we need to know for our good, and are yet incapable of discovering for ourselves.' Dionysius makes similar exalted claims about the scriptures in *The Divine Names* 1.[1].49. in which he discusses the fact that the content of the scriptures surpasses human intellect. It is this fact combined with the hierarchical argument which clarifies the Dionysian claim regarding scriptural inspiration.

Doctrina Christiana, where he clearly outlines which books he considers the scriptures to be made up of. Augustine's list is identical to the established canon. The only difference that one might encounter is that Augustine did not know of a Bible as such. Instead he relied on the *scripturae*, or 'writings', which were grouped together by similarity. He knew the Pauline Letters, the Prophets, the Gospels, and so on. Thus, he placed the books in a different order than moderns would recognize, but he agreed on which books should be considered scripture.¹⁶⁴

Without the advantage of having texts like the *De Doctrina Christiana*, scholars who study the Dionysian writings are left to construct the Dionysian canon based on quotations and allusions found in the texts themselves. Paul Rorem has detailed this in the back of his edition of the Dionysian *Corpus* in a section entitled 'Index to Biblical Allusions and Quotations',¹⁶⁵ as well as documenting his discoveries in his monograph, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*. His discovery is that Dionysius employs all books of the Old and New Testament Canons with one exception, and in an interesting sidenote suggests the for one claiming to be a convert of Saint Paul's, he makes very sparing use of his teacher.¹⁶⁶

C. Image and Inspiration.

The agreement shared with regard to the inspiration of the scriptures alluded to above leads to an agreement about the nature of the scriptural imagery. In both Augustine and Dionysius it is agreed that the content of the scriptures, being that they are inspired by God, contain a revelation which is above human capacity, however in

¹⁶⁴ See O'Donnell (1999), 99-101.

¹⁶⁵ 'Index to Biblical Allusions and Quotations' in Paul Rorem (ed.). *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem (New York: Paulist Press, 1987). 294-304.

¹⁶⁶ Rorem (1984), 12.

acknowledgement of the estate of those whom they are intended for, they are tailored to the capacities of Man.

This tailoring of the scriptures is discussed at multiple points in the *De Trinitate*. For example, in Book One, Augustine suggests,

It was therefore to purify the human spirit of such falsehoods that holy scripture, adapting itself to babies, did not shun any words, proper to any kind of thing whatever, that might nourish our understanding and enable it to raise up to the sublimities of divine things. Thus it would use words taken from corporeal things to speak about God...¹⁶⁷

This tailoring, while necessary, can lead to three major problems in scriptural interpretation. Augustine suggests that there are, ‘...those who conceive of God in bodily terms, those who do so in terms of created spirit such as soul, and those who think of him as neither body nor as created spirit...’.¹⁶⁸ Errors come out of trapping the mind in the images which are meant as necessary condescension to the estate of fallen Man, and it is exactly this tendency which Augustine combats immediately following his articulation of the various problems. He says,

...whoever thinks that God is dazzling white, for example, or fiery red, is mistaken, yet these are realities of the bodily world. Or whoever thinks that God forgets things one moment and remembers them the next, or anything like that, is certainly quite wrong...¹⁶⁹

Augustine, therefore, suggests that the scriptures bear a message which is fitted to Man’s

¹⁶⁷ DT. 1. 1. [2]. 66.

¹⁶⁸ DT. 1. 1. [1]. 65.

¹⁶⁹ DT. 1. 1. [1]. 66.

capabilities, and warns extensively that these ‘artificial images’, as Sheldon-Williams puts it, cannot be taken as perfectly representing God. They are rather methods of drawing Man into the conversation through means which he is capable of.

It is no different for Dionysius as is stated clearly in *The Divine Names*. He suggests, near the opening of the treatise, that Man must,

...hold on to the scriptural rule that when we say anything about God, we should set down the truth “not in the plausible words of human wisdom but in demonstration of power granted by the Spirit” to the scripture writers, a power by which, in a manner surpassing speech and knowledge, we [mankind] reach a union superior to anything available to us by way of our own abilities or activities in the realm of discourse or intellect.¹⁷⁰

Here Dionysius clearly articulates the nature of the scriptural names as surpassing ‘speech and knowledge’, and bringing mankind to a place he could not reach by ‘discourse or intellect’. The content of the scriptures is undoubtedly divine. For further evidence of this, all one must do is return to the hierarchical treatises in which the movement towards revelation in the form of the scriptures is described.¹⁷¹

As in the *De Trinitate* of Augustine, it is only possible to encounter this divine Light shone down upon Man because ‘...the things of God are revealed to each mind in proportion to its capacities...’.¹⁷² Therefore, the scriptures are God’s communication to Man, and they express their content in a way which Man can approach them for interpretation.

¹⁷⁰ DN. 1. [1]. 49.

¹⁷¹ See section ‘A’ in Chapter Two of this paper (35), entitled ‘Movement of the Dionysian *Corpus*’ for a description of how the scriptures come into existence.

¹⁷² DN. 1.[1]. 49.

Given the above observations, it is clear that not only do Augustine and Dionysius share a common mind in terms of inspiration, but also as to the basic functionality of the scriptures. They serve to meet Man where he is so that he may gain access to divine truth. From this point, however, similarity begins to disappear with regards to the scriptural images. Differences should be noted with regard to the manner of interpretation of the images, as well as the purpose of the content which comes from the exegesis of the scriptural imagery.

D. Exegetical Method.

The interpretation of the images within scripture is of significant importance to the goals of both the Augustinian and Dionysian texts, however there are various differences in the way that they are interpreted which must be noted. Rowan Williams, in an essay entitled 'The Discipline of Scripture', suggests that there are two predominant ways in which the scriptures have been understood within the Christian tradition. He suggests that, 'There is a reading - we could say - where the unity of what is read is worked out in time, and a reading where the unity is worked out in something more like space.'¹⁷³ There seems to be some merit in this observation, at least within a discussion of Augustine and Dionysius.

In his discussion of the theophanies, Augustine sets out certain general rules which he suggests apply to the interpretation of any specific image within the scriptures. He begins by posing three questions which have bearing on the content of the theophanies. First, 'whether it was the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit who appeared under these created forms to the fathers'.¹⁷⁴ Second, he asks, 'whether the creatures by which God would manifest himself as he judged opportune to the sight of

¹⁷³ Williams (2000), 45.

¹⁷⁴ D.T. II.3.[13].106.

men were formed for this function alone; or whether angels already in existence were sent to speak in God's name and made themselves media out of created material for use in their duties; or even...turned and changed their own bodies'.¹⁷⁵ Third, and finally, he asks how the sending involved in the theophanies differs 'from the one we read of in the Gospel.'¹⁷⁶

The important question for our purposes is the second, where it is noted that the Old Testament theophanies are 'creaturely'. In explanation of this Augustine states in Book II,

We do not usually mean the same thing by 'There appeared to me' as by 'I saw'. It is indeed normal to say both 'There appeared to me' and 'I saw' in the case of visions of bodily images; but in the case of things offered to our eyes in their definite bodily shape we usually say 'I saw' and not 'There appeared to me'.¹⁷⁷

These two brief sections of writing from the *De Trinitate* speak volumes about Augustinian exegesis. The context of the manifestation presented is tied directly to the Incarnation as historical event. Although Augustine is clear that the 'substance' of God can in no way be perceived by created sense, there exists a more subtle distinction between what is revealed of Him in the theophanies and the proper missions of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost and the Word in the Incarnation.

It is primarily because the theophanies occur chronologically prior to the Incarnation that they must be understood to be the work of angels. Prior to the Incarnation, there may be no way in which Man could 'see' God, because God and Man

¹⁷⁵ D.T. II.3.[13].107.

¹⁷⁶ D.T. II.3.[13].107.

¹⁷⁷ D.T. II.2.[11].106.

had not yet been eternally joined. It must therefore be a creature which appears to the created sense. What the scriptures convey to the reader is closely tied to the scriptural narrative, the temporal sequence of events.

Dionysius' approach to the images of scripture is somewhat different. He does not stand in denial of the scriptural narrative, however, it is impossible to deny the fact that he speaks very little of it in his works.¹⁷⁸ Based on this assumption, it might appear to some (especially those of the Protestant tradition) that he does not take the scriptures very seriously. In order to make this claim, however, one would have to deny certain very important facts. For instance, Dionysius makes very little explicit use of any other source apart from the scriptures.¹⁷⁹ In fact all his writings are either expositions of scripture, or commentary on the liturgy.¹⁸⁰ This fact alone should be enough to encourage a further exploration of the importance Dionysius places on the scriptures.

Although these facts suggest that the scriptures are taken seriously by Dionysius, they do nothing to prove that his exegetical method is not entirely random. One might try to suggest that images are simply pulled out of the scriptures to fulfill the Dionysian agenda, it is this attitude, however, that Dionysius directly speaks to at various points throughout his texts.

In the opening of his *The Mystical Theology* Dionysius warns Saint Timothy that he should,

...see to it that none of this [the content of the treatise] comes to the hearing of the

¹⁷⁸ In EH. 3. [5]. 214. Dionysius says, speaking of Old and New Testaments, 'The one wrote truth by way of images, while the other described things as they happened.' He obviously notes the existence of the scriptural narrative, but what is in question is its exegetical importance.

¹⁷⁹ The only other authority he cites is Hierotheus, his 'famous teacher'. See DN. 2. [10]. 65, and DN. 3. [2]. 69.

¹⁸⁰ Rorem (1993), 5.

uninformed, that is to say, to those caught up with the things of the world, who imagine that there is nothing beyond instances of individual being and who think that by their own intellectual resources they can have a direct knowledge of him who has made the shadows his hiding place.¹⁸¹

Then again at the beginning of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, another warning,

But see that you do not betray the holy of holies. Let your respect for the things of the hidden God be shown in knowledge that comes from the intellect and is unseen. Keep these things of God unshared and undefiled by the uninitiated. Let your sharing of the sacred befit the sacred things: Let it be by way of sacred enlightenment for sacred men only.¹⁸²

In these two passages two things are expressed which are noteworthy in considering the interpretation of images. The first is Dionysius' claim that he belongs to a tradition, a tradition only shared in, and only to be shared with, those initiated into it. It is only these who are allowed to know the interpretations of the scriptures, that they might not be subject to the vain scrutiny of *hoi polloi*.¹⁸³ Dionysius is here speaking of initiation into the Christian tradition - it is only in conjunction with the tradition that the scriptures can be properly interpreted.¹⁸⁴ As Paul Rorem points out, 'The uplifting or anagogical movement is not worked by the symbols *per se* in any sense of their own efficacy or

¹⁸¹ MT. 1. [2]. 136.

¹⁸² EH. 1. [1]. 195.

¹⁸³ CH. 2. [2]. 149.

¹⁸⁴ This point seems to be somewhat lost on Rolt (1920), 40-44 in his introduction to his translations of some of the *Corpus*. His linking of the scriptures with various doctrines ignores that fact that Dionysius treats the scriptures only in conjunction with the tradition. While his conclusions may be right, his ignoring this fact leaves a large gap in understanding Dionysian exegesis.

their magical manipulation, but rather by their interpretation,¹⁸⁵ and their interpretation may only occur properly within the tradition.

The second point of importance is that the tradition finds its expression in the liturgy of the Church. Again one is reminded of what Fr. Andrew Louth points out, that ‘...the heart of Deny’s theology is liturgical...’.¹⁸⁶ As described in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, the interpretation of the scriptures is given through the teaching of the Bishop at the liturgy, this is a privilege even the catechumens are allowed to partake of by right of their Baptism. The scriptures are read and then interpreted.¹⁸⁷

It seems then that both Augustine and Dionysius have strict methods of interpreting images. Augustine points to the narrative, by placing everything in relation to the Incarnation. Dionysius, who on the surface appears scattered, also adopts a system, a system which he clearly claims to belong to the Christian tradition only accessible to those within the tradition as expressed in his works.

E. Purpose of Exegesis.

The exact purpose of exegesis is another question worthy of investigation. The content and purpose of exegesis of the images differs in great regard. Both authors suggest a certain result comes from interpretation, but just what that result is, is somewhat different in each case.

Augustine’s exegesis serves a very specific purpose within the context of the movement of the text studied here. Books I through IV, which are the books largely concerned with scriptural exegesis, including the exegesis of the angelic manifestations

¹⁸⁵ Rorem (1980), 91.

¹⁸⁶ Louth (1989), 29.

¹⁸⁷ Rorem (1984), 118. notes that in the scriptures being read at the liturgy is a movement towards making the images less material, by moving them from paper to sound, through their being read. In reading the text, it seems somewhat unclear what the role of the private reading of scripture has in the Dionysian system.

spoken of above, serve to illuminate the revealed doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, interpretation of the images serve to, in their own way, present the Trinity in revealed form to the intellect, so that in turn Man may begin to search out the image within the human soul with the most precise information possible. As discussed above, two of the driving questions with regard to the theophanies are, which person of the Trinity is revealed in the theophany, and how these stand in relation to the actual missions of the divine persons. Both of these questions stand to aid in clarification of the doctrine of the Trinity in order that the image may be discovered within the soul. The clearer the doctrine is articulated from scripture, the easier it is found in the soul.

For Dionysius, the interpretation of the images has a direct implication on the restoration of the relationship of God to Man. It is in the interpretation of the images that Man is lifted in closer communion with God. Each image furthers his knowledge of God. As Andrew Louth points out the movement is not up a ladder towards God, but each is a movement deeper into the mystery of the Divine.¹⁸⁸

In both the cases of Augustine and Dionysius, the images of scripture exist at the level of analogy. According to the definition established above in neither case can they be called proper or 'natural' images. In the case of Augustine, they serve to clarify the doctrine of the Trinity, so that the Trinitarian image may be found in the human soul. For Dionysius, on the other hand, the images themselves function to move Man deeper into the knowledge and love of God through observing their grading which is taught according to tradition. The scriptural imagery then serves a different purpose in the two systems that have been explored, and their content is uncovered by differing manners.

¹⁸⁸

Louth (1981), 176.

Chapter Four: Vestigia and Triads.

A. Introduction.

Following Augustine's movement in the *De Trinitate*, this chapter will represent a digression from the movement of *exteriora*, *interiora* to *superiora*. While discussion of the *vestigia* represent a digression from the general movement of the text, it is a somewhat logical next step in the exploration undertaken by this thesis as the vestiges do represent an ontological midway point between the scriptural images and the image of God in Man.

Amongst those things which can be considered at the level of likeness and analogy in the Augustinian and Dionysian systems, there is an undeniable presence of triadic structures. That is to say that when both Augustine and Dionysius reflect on the *cosmos* they see things as falling into threes. Where Augustine has 'trinities', Dionysius has triads. The similarities, however, do not extend much beyond this point as the reasons will be demonstrated through the following exploration of them.¹⁸⁹

In the case of Augustine each individual vestige is a 'trinity'. As he explores the human self in preparation for final clarification the image of God in Man, Augustine identifies various groups of three which function together in way which is analogous to a greater or lesser degree with the Divine Trinity. Augustine would not call one thing by itself a vestige, it only gets this title when it is in relation to its other two components. On the other hand, Dionysius' triads are the result of reflection on the *cosmos*. In his case he takes three things which are already granted the title of analogy, and brings them together into groups of three. This chapter will seek to explore the difference which has been articulated here, and in the process postulate some reasons as to why this

¹⁸⁹ Pelikan (1987), 19 notes this level of similarity, but does not go much beyond it.

difference exists. To begin it is necessary that one develops a very basic sense of the presence of these 'threes' in their manifestations throughout the texts of the authors studied here.

B. *Augustinian Vestigia.*

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Augustine's journey begins with the external presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Then Genesis 1:26 calls him to begin a search for the highest reflection of the Trinity in the human soul. Although Augustine knows that the image of God must be located in highest part of the soul and has a rough idea of its placement and then digresses into a discussion of a series of less refined 'trinities'. In Book XI Augustine suggests, 'Let us try then if we can to pick out some trace of the trinity in this outer man too. Not that he is also the image of God in the same way as the inner man...'.¹⁹⁰ Rather than making a smooth movement from the external to the internal, Augustine does some reconnaissance before positing the location of the image of God in Man.

The reason for this is simple. Augustine says,

As best we can then let us look for some model of the Trinity in the man who is decaying; even if it is not a more accurate model, it may be easier to distinguish. It is not without reason that this too is called man; but it would not be unless he bore some resemblance to the inner man. And by the very logic of our condition, according to which we have become mortal and carnal, it is easier and almost more familiar to deal with visible than with intelligible things, even though the former are outside and the latter inside us, the former sensed with the senses of the body and the latter understood with the mind, while we conscious selves are not perceptible by the senses, not bodies

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DT. XI. Pro. [1]. 303.

that is, but only intelligible, because we are life.¹⁹¹

The vestiges are a helpful digression because they are easier to work with and learn from even though ultimately less accurate. However, because there is some relationship between these and the image of God in Man, what is learned more easily here can help in the more difficult stages of refinement later. This process might be compared to a surgeon operating on an animal before a human, what is learned in the animal can in a limited degree be applied to human anatomy.

The *vestigia* that Augustine encounters are numerous. First there is the ‘Trinity in external vision’,¹⁹² which is made up of, ‘the thing we see, a stone or a flame or anything else the eye can see, which of course could exist even before it was seen. Next there is the actual sight or vision, which did not exist even before we sensed the object presented to the sense. Thirdly there is what holds the sense of the eyes on the thing being seen, namely the conscious intention.’¹⁹³ The second *vestigia* is the ‘Trinity of internal vision’, consisting of, ‘memory and internal sight and the will which couples them together...’.¹⁹⁴ Third, moving into the ‘inner man’, is the ‘Trinity of Faith’, where the three which will ultimately be decided upon as the image of God in Man (memory, understanding and will) tries to find its proper focus.¹⁹⁵ Fourth, one might include memory, understanding and will focussed on the mind as the highest of the analogies. Last, add to these the earlier vestiges mentioned during Augustine’s first attempt to discover the image of God in Man, for instance, the familial trinity of husband, wife and

¹⁹¹ DT. XI. Pro. [1]. 303.

¹⁹² The names of the *vestigia* used here are those given them by Sullivan (1963), 95-105.

¹⁹³ DT. XI. 1. [2]. 304.

¹⁹⁴ DT. XI. 2. [6]. 308.

¹⁹⁵ DT. XIV. 1. [4]. 372.

child which was spoken of in detail in Chapter One.¹⁹⁶

C. Dionysius' Triads.

As in the works of Augustine, within the works of Dionysius, one easily notes the presence of various triadic structures. In the *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius discusses the nine orders of angels and clearly groups them into three groups of three,¹⁹⁷ although he claims that it is not he who has done this but rather, 'my own sacred-initiator has divided these [nine] into threefold groups.'¹⁹⁸ The triadic structures appear again in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, where humanity is divided up into groups of three according to order. The clergy, it is noted, consist of the orders of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. The laity consists of the monastics, the regular communicants and those who do not receive the Sacrament. Lastly, the non-communicants are divided into the penitents, the possessed and the catechumens. Also Dionysius chooses to treat three sacraments; those of Illumination (or Baptism), the Synaxis (the Eucharist) and ointment (Holy Unction), creating another triad.

It is therefore clear based on the textual evidence presented above that both Augustine and Dionysius exhibit the presence of triads throughout the *cosmos* as they see it. There is however, as pointed to in the introduction of this chapter, a difference in them, being that for Augustine three things grouped together represent one *vestigia*, for Dionysius it three independent members of the *cosmos* that become a single triad.

D. Trinitarianism in Relation to the *Vestigia* and Triads.

One of the great curiosities of the Dionysian *Corpus* is the fact that, while he

¹⁹⁶ See (26) of this thesis.

¹⁹⁷ Seraphim, cherubim, and thrones are discussed at CH. 7.161 - 166, dominions, powers, and authorities at CH. 8.166-169, and principalities, archangels and angels at CH. 9.169-173.

¹⁹⁸ CH. 6.[2].160. Here he is speaking of Hierotheus.

recognizes triadic structures all in many places within his writings, he never once makes the connection between these triads and the doctrine of the Trinity, as one might expect a Christian author to do. In fact it is points such as these which have allowed allegation to be levied against the orthodoxy of Dionysius' view of the Trinity.¹⁹⁹ To view Dionysius in this way is over simplistic, and perhaps a result of reading Augustine into Dionysius, rather than evaluating Dionysius on his own terms.

For Augustine, the recognition and discussion of the *vestigia* arise in direct relationship to Trinitarianism. As has been stated numerous times above, Augustine's search is for the image of the Trinity imprinted on Man, so that through this image Man may come to know God more fully. The image of God in Man is Trinitarian, and so the likenesses or analogies share that in common, as they too bear the mark of their creator.

It is important to remember that Augustine's search was never limited to the discovery of 'threes' like one might have been tempted to think in the beginning. As Gerhart Ladner points out in *The Idea of Reform*, 'The vestiges and images of the Triune God in nature and man, as Augustine sees them, are made to correspond to the so-called appropriation (attribute or activities) of the Divine Persons without emphasis on three as number.'²⁰⁰ Ladner is here reminding his reader that Augustine's emphasis is on the Trinity, not just threes. Hence, he rejects some of the *vestigia* as potential images because they are three, but not one in any meaningful way.²⁰¹ It is three-in-oneness, it is Trinitarian images that Augustine needs to clarify his journey to find the Trinitarian image of God in Man.

¹⁹⁹ See Copleston (1993), 92 for an example of this position.

²⁰⁰ Ladner (1967), 213.

²⁰¹ See for example Augustine's treatment of the *vestigia* of external sight at DT. XI. 1. [2]. 304-305.

Seeing the role of the Trinity in the Augustinian approach, does this suggest that Dionysius somehow rejects Trinitarianism? This charge can be approached through a comparison of the basic Trinitarian statements of each author. Augustine says this of the Trinity,

Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one only God, great omnipotent, good, just, merciful, creator of all things visible and invisible...And when he hears Father called the only God, he must not exclude the Son or the Holy Spirit from that title, for he is of course the only God together with whomever he is the one God with; so to when we hear the Son called the only God, we must accept it without in any way excluding the Father or the Holy Spirit. And this man must also say one being, in order to avoid thinking that one is greater or better than another, or in any way different; yet not in such a way that he takes the Father to be himself Son and Holy Spirit and whatever else they are called with reference to each other...²⁰²

Dionysius seems to follow suit nicely,

...the differentiations within the Godhead have to do with the benign processions and revelations of God...Thus, regarding the divine unity beyond being, they assert that the indivisible Trinity holds within a shared undifferentiated unity its supra-essential subsistence...Let me resort here to examples from what we perceive and from what is familiar. In a house the light from all the lamps is completely interpenetrating, yet each is clearly distinct. There is distinction in unity and there is unity in distinction.²⁰³

From these small passages it is clear that both Augustine and Dionysius profess God to

²⁰² DT. VII.4.[12].231.

²⁰³ DN. 2.[4].61. In Louth (2002), 95 it is demonstrated that these explications of the Trinity are virtually the same as those forwarded by Cappadocian Fathers, as well as Saint John Damascene, which is further evidence of Dionysius' orthodox Trinitarianism.

be Trinity, and that the Trinity is three persons of one substance. This suggests that it is not due to a lack of understanding and profession of the Trinity that Dionysius does not explicitly link the triads to the doctrine of the Trinity.²⁰⁴

Having absolved Dionysius of the charge of heterodox belief with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, one is forced to look elsewhere to discover the reasoning for Dionysius' seeming omission.

The answer may be presented to us in turning to the Athanasian Creed, which reminds us that 'we worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity.' Man's knowledge of God revolves around the understanding of two manners of describing the divine existence. God is both perfect Unity and Trinity, as stated in the Creed.

Augustine is very clearly focussed on God as Trinity, while Dionysius focusses on God as unity, but neither excludes the other's position. For Augustine Man is created in the image of the Trinitarian God, and therefore, based on a series of indications, God's image in Man must also be 'trinitarian'. This image, however, is difficult to decipher because of its placement in the spiritual realm - not the easiest place for fallen Man to study - so Augustine suggests a return to the corporeal where the images are less precise, but more easily identified. In his analysis of the *cosmos*, Man is exposed to trinities which represent gradually improving degrees of accuracy until identifying the highest achievable image of God, the 'Trinitarian' memory, will and understanding within the soul of Man. Augustine so clearly sees the Trinitarian structure of things because knowledge of God (as Trinity) is so closely tied making these identifications.

Dionysius, on the other hand, shows no signs of placing the amount of emphasis

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In *Denys the Areopagite* (Louth (1989), 89), it is suggested that Dionysius Trinitarianism bears a marked resemblance to that of most of the Eastern Fathers.

on Trinitarianism that Augustine does, while clearly not diverging in his belief in the Trinitarian God. In his texts, especially in *The Divine Names*, Dionysius spends much more time in discussion of God as unity. See for instance the examples cited in Chapter Three of this text.²⁰⁵ The greatest likeness of God in the Dionysian system is the 'oneness' that the entire *cosmos* can display once Man has been restored to his proper placement within it.

To suggest then that the triads relationship to the Trinity slips Dionysius' attention and is grounds for suspecting his Trinitarianism is rather unfair. To see it in this way is to impose Augustinian categories on the work of Dionysius, who, while not opposing Augustine's suggestions, plots a different approach. What this does not answer, however, is why Dionysius clearly posits a multitude of triads throughout his works. If his focus rests on the unity of God, why make mention of the triads, if it is not to call attention to the Trinity?

Paul Rorem forwards the most likely possibility. He suggests that the triads of Dionysius 'probably derive not from any trinitarian model but from the Neoplatonic fascination for the way an intermediary, or mean (or middle) term between extremes, creates a triad.'²⁰⁶ The triads do not represent a snub in the direction of the Trinity, rather they are evidence of a very typical tenet within the Neoplatonic tradition.²⁰⁷

It would be unfair to suggest, based on the evidence above, that the Dionysian account is somehow inferior to that forwarded by Augustine. The divergences between the two authors represent two different approaches to the same truth, Augustine focussing on God as Trinity, while Dionysius focusses on God as Unity. The *vestigia*

²⁰⁵ See (48) for further clarification..

²⁰⁶ Rorem (1993), 20.

²⁰⁷ In Louth (1989), 13 it is noted that Proclus treats triads with a great deal of importance.

are Trinitarian in Augustine, while individual vestiges are grouped together into threes in Dionysius. What the two share in common is one faith, evidenced by the fact that neither would exclude the truths that the other holds. While Augustine calls attention to the Trinity, he clearly does not forget God as Unity, and Dionysius, while spending much time on God as Unity, clearly believes Him also to be Trinity.

E. General Importance.

While it is true, as Sullivan suggests, that the ‘...Areopagite is silent about the trinitarian image in the human soul,’ it is important to note that Dionysius does see likenesses in the same places as suggested by Augustine.²⁰⁸ The Dionysian *cosmos* is entirely made up of individual *vestigia*; likenesses of God. Each thing is a *vestigia* in its own right, the human mind is no exception. It is the individual *vestigia* which are grouped together into triads. *Vestigia* are, therefore, present in both systems, but as pointed out above, they take different forms - for Augustine they are ‘trinities’, for Dionysius they are not.

The next question one might ask is with regard to the overall importance of the *vestigia* to each author. In an article entitled ‘The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclast Controversy’, Gerhart B. Ladner suggests that, ‘Contrary to Augustinian and, generally speaking, the Western idea of knowing God even through his vestiges in non-human nature, the Byzantines saw the things of nature only as accompanying symbols...’.²⁰⁹ This statement, taken out of its context, might lead one to believe that Augustine prizes the *vestigia* more than his Eastern brethren,

²⁰⁸ Sullivan (1963), 223.

²⁰⁹ Ladner (1953), 10.

including Dionysius, this is however a questionable claim.²¹⁰

As has been demonstrated above, the vestiges spoken of represent a digression from the overall Augustinian movement. They serve the specific purpose of making detection of the image of God in Man easier, because while the lack accuracy, they are more easily studied. The soul is lead to explore as an aid to detection of the created image, but they do not represent absolutely vital steps in the Augustinian system. For Dionysius, on the other hand, the vestiges, from lowliest to greatest analogy represent gradual steps deeper into the knowledge and love of God as has been discussed in detail in Chapter Two of this text. The created may receive great emphasis in the system of Augustine, as a result of one privilege member, however when reflecting on everything below that level it is undoubtedly true that the vestiges receive more importance in the work of Dionysius.

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What Ladner is referring to here is the idea that for Augustine, as well as for much of the Western tradition following him, God comes to be known through His image in Man because the image in Man is located on a sliding scale of natural images. In the Eastern tradition, the Word is the only natural image, and all nature, even the highest element in the created *cosmos*, are artificial images. This discussion will be taken up in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis.

Chapter Five:
History of the Imago Dei

A. Introduction.

To this point in this study of Augustine and Dionysius, there has been no difference in the ontological level of the images treated. They have all been artificial images, likenesses, and analogies, which have only differed in the function that they preform within the overall contexts of their respective systems. This commonality changes in the discussion of Man as the image of God. On this point Augustine and Dionysius part ways.

The most basic indication of what will emerge as a major point of difference between the two writers under consideration lies in their respective interpretations of Genesis 1:26, or what it means for Man to be created ‘in the image of God’. For Dionysius, this means what it has meant for most of the Fathers throughout the history of the Christian Church, for Augustine, however, there is a new interpretation which is of great influence to the ages following him. The extent of Augustine’s originality and Dionysius’ conservatism can only be appreciated by placing them with the context of a sampling of the Fathers which precede them, so the project of this chapter is do just this, and then the next chapter will serve to highlight the implications of Augustine’s change in interpretation, as well as analysing Dionysius’ reasons for his position.

An analysis of the way in which the Fathers of the Church discussed Man’s creation in the image of God, through treatment of Genesis 1:26, will demonstrate that while there exist some subtle differences on the part of individual Fathers, they share a surprisingly similar understanding of the created image in Man despite cultural and temporal barriers. It is an undeniable fact, for better or for worse, that image doctrine is amazingly consistent within the history of the Church until the reinterpretation offered

by Saint Augustine.

This paper, which attempts to focus on a comparison of understanding of image forwarded by Augustine and Dionysius, cannot claim to undertake a categorical study of the Fathers in order to prove this assertion of similarity. It can, however, present a fair sampling of the Fathers across time and location in hopes of demonstrating the probability of the truth of this assertion and offer the observations of other scholars who have studied the other Fathers in greater depth. Following the approach indicated above, this paper will explore the earliest meditation on man's being created in the image of God known, found in the works of Saint Irenaeus, followed by that of Origen, Saint Athanasius and lastly Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

B. Saint Irenaeus.¹⁹⁷

It is suspected that Saint Irenaeus was born in the middle of the Second century, an estimation based on anecdotal evidence which suggests that as a child he heard Saint Polycarp of Smyrna preach a homily. He is thought to have been a native of Smyrna in Asia Minor, who spoke Greek, and shows evidence of having been educated at Rome. Later in life, having demonstrated promise mediating a debate between Catholics and Montanists, Irenaeus was soon appointed to be consecrated Bishop of the See of Lyons, where he is reputed to have died as a martyr.

Adversus Haereses, perhaps the best known of Irenaeus' works, is the most obvious place to begin a search for how he understands Genesis 1:26. As mentioned above, the discussion there is the earliest representation of post-Apostolic thought on man's creation in God's image. Like much of the rest of his developed theology, the discussion of image is placed within the context of a refutation of Gnosticism. The Gnostics were in his time contesting that, Genesis 1:26 suggested that Man was made in

¹⁹⁷ Biographical information may be located in McLeod(1999), 52 and Minns(1994), 1-2.

the image and likeness of the thirty-one Eons, rather than the one true God.¹⁹⁸ To counter this heresy, Irenaeus suggests that Christians may rightly interpret the text by separating ‘image’ and ‘likeness’. Humanity bears a likeness to God insofar as it is rational and exercises freedom of will.¹⁹⁹ He states:

But the wheat and the chaff, being inanimate and irrational have been made by nature. But man, being endowed with reason, and in this respect like to God, having been made free in his will, and with power over himself, is himself the cause of himself, that sometimes he becomes wheat, and sometimes chaff.²⁰⁰

Man is like God insofar as his actions are rational and his will is free, in this state Man is likened to wheat. Should he reject these two qualities, and become less like God, then he is like the chaff, which will be thrown into the fire.

As mentioned above, there is a distinction to be made between discussion of likeness and image. Likeness is denigrated according to the manner of life lived by the individual. Image, in Irenaeus’ account, is another matter. While reasonableness, and freedom may be applied to the relationship between Man and God analogously, image bears a stronger relationship than analogy. Image is a material reality possessing a visible form, either the same, or similar to the one present in the exemplar. There must, in Irenaeus’ account, be a relationship between the image and the exemplar. McLeod presents a useful example to demonstrate precisely what this relationship is not. He suggests that it is not like that of a statue to its subject, the relationship between Adam

¹⁹⁸ McLeod (1999), 53.

¹⁹⁹ Minns (1994), 60.

²⁰⁰ *Adv.Haer.* IV.4.3.

and Christ is much stronger.²⁰¹ Behr, in his book *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, suggests that,

An image also has a revelatory function: the image reveals the archetype of which it is an image. If the image of God is located in the flesh of man, then that very flesh must reveal God. But as God himself is immaterial, and therefore formless, the archetype of the image of God in man must be the incarnate Son of God.²⁰²

Thus the image of God which Man bears, is humanity's creation after the Son, who is the true and perfect image of the Father.²⁰³ Irenaeus explains it thus; 'For in times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not actually shown; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created.'²⁰⁴

McLeod suggests that it is 'because humans are by their nature images of Christ that they can be said to become like unto God, provided that they live as Christ had done in obedience to God's will.'²⁰⁵

For Irenaeus then, there is a two-fold relationship to God. First, one which is analogous, and captured by the term 'likeness'. The other is 'image' which denotes a relationship to Christ.

C. Origen.

Greer, in his 1979 edition of selected works belonging to Origen, says of the Alexandrian that '[he] was as towering a figure as Augustine and Aquinas. Even after the builder of the *Hagia Sophia* destroyed most of his works, his overt and hidden

²⁰¹ McLeod (1999), 54.

²⁰² Behr (2000), 89.

²⁰³ See Saint Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 4:4 and his Letter to the Colossians 1:15.

²⁰⁴ *Adv.Haer.* V.22.2.

²⁰⁵ McLeod (1999), 57.

influence has proved no less far reaching than theirs.²⁰⁶ This is tremendous praise for the man, born in Alexandria in 185 AD, and who lived his life mired in the turbulence of the beginning of the end of the Roman Empire.²⁰⁷ Most of the current knowledge of the life of Origen comes from Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*, which possesses limited information about him until he reaches the age of 17, other than to inform the reader that he was born into a Christian family who appreciated his theological knowledge and supported his endeavours. In 202 AD he witnessed his first of the major persecutions which Christians would endure at the hands of the Roman government, and it is recorded that he exhorted his father to martyrdom. At this same time he began his teaching career, and by 204 AD, he was named head of the local catechetical school. Eusebius suggests that it was during his days as a teacher that he castrated himself influenced by Matthew 19:12, however this assertion is now widely questioned.²⁰⁸

As Origen spent more time teaching, he poured more time into the production of written works, which developed wide circulation in the Church and had the effect of making him quite famous. In 230 AD, after taking part in a dispute, Origen was ordained in Caesarea, where he would spend most of the rest of his adult life. It would be there that he suffered torture during one of Decius' persecutions around 250 AD, and eventually, in 254 AD, he succumbed to the injuries he had sustained four years earlier.

While sharing many things in common with Irenaeus' discussion of the image,

²⁰⁶ Greer (1979), xi.

²⁰⁷ Biographical information for Origen is largely taken from 'Introduction' Greer (1979), 1-37.

²⁰⁸ 'For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.'

Origen presents a more complex and slightly different notion than does his predecessor. He makes interesting observations in all areas surrounding the notion of the *imago dei* in Man beginning with creation itself. Reading Genesis 1:26, Origen comments that the plural, 'us', signifies God's commissioning of the angels in the work of creation, a point consistent with the rabbinic tradition of commentary.²⁰⁹ Hobbel, speaking for Origen, suggests that 'God himself began the work, which was then later mediated or completed by others to whom he spoke...'.²¹⁰

With regard to the creation of Man, Origen comments that one must understand both the now familiar Genesis 1:26, as well as Genesis 2:7: 'the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'. He suggests that the first refers to the creation of the 'higher man', and the second refers to the creation of the 'lower man'. The 'higher man', or the soul, is made after the image of God, the 'lower man' is made after earthly matter. Like Irenaeus, Man is endowed with a relation to the image at creation, and while it may be marred, it cannot be destroyed. Origen states, 'if anyone dares to attribute corruption of substance to what was made according to the image and likeness of God, in my opinion he extends the charge of impiety also to the Son of God himself, since he is also called in Scripture the 'image of God'.²¹¹ Likeness, on the other hand, may be lost if Man abuses those qualities that participate in the virtues of God, like 'intelligence of the soul, its righteousness, temperance, courage, wisdom, discipline', but also if Man ceases to recognize consciously the he is made in the image of God, naturally, he will drift in

²⁰⁹ Sullivan (1963), 167-168 notes that this interpretation is also forwarded by Philo and Pelikan (1971), 197 suggests that Justin Martyr strikes out at this interpretation as a typical Jewish interpretation of the text.

²¹⁰ Hobbel (1989), 301.

²¹¹ *De princ.* IV.4.10.

terms of likeness.²¹² Origen says:

But from another point of view let us consider whether it does not appear impious that the mind that can receive God should suffer destruction of its substance, as though the very fact that it can understand and perceive God were not able to afford it continual duration. This is especially so since, even if the mind falls through negligence so that it cannot receive God into itself purely and entirely, it nonetheless always retains in itself, as it were, certain seeds of restoration and of being recalled to a better understanding, when the “inner man”, which is also called the rational man, is called back to the image and likeness of God, who created him.²¹³

Origen seems to suggest that Man is made after the image of the Image, after the Word or Son of God who is the image of the Father. This is a slight shift from Irenaeus, who insists that it is the post-Incarnation Christ alone that Man is made after.²¹⁴ This he gleans from texts such as 2 Corinthians 4:4 which refer to Christ ‘who is the image of God’ and Colossians 1:15 in which Saint Paul refers to Him as ‘the image of the invisible God’. Thus, Man is created after the image (*kat’ eikon*), after Christ, who is the image (*eikon*) of God.

D. Saint Athanasius.

Saint Athanasius was born in 298AD in Egypt and lived out most of his life in the city of Alexandria.²¹⁵ In 303 AD, while Athanasius was still very young, the Diocletian persecutions began, and within a few years they had spread to Egypt affecting

²¹² *De princ.* IV.4.10.

²¹³ *De princ.* IV.4.9.

²¹⁴ Crouzel (1989), 191.

²¹⁵ Biographical details for Athanasius will be taken from Anon (1946), 17-26, unless otherwise cited.

his hometown. During the time of the persecutions, he witness many deaths wrought by the persecutors. This played an integral role in his Christian growth as one of his biographers points out that it is as a result of these horrifying events that 'he had not only learned the Christian faith, [but also] he had seen it in action'.²¹⁶

During a short period of the persecutions, Athanasius was sent to live in the desert with the monastic communities for his own safety. During this time, monasticism was flourishing in the deserts under the guidance of the first 'desert father', Saint Antony.²¹⁷ It is believed that it was here that Athanasius first met the man whose biography he would later write.²¹⁸

In 319 AD, a presbyter named Arius emerged and wielded great influence . His heretical teaching forced the Council of Nicaea, whose purpose was to define the faith and strengthen the Church in its combat of his dangerous errors. Athanasius was present at this council as a deacon and secretary to Alexander, Patriarch of Alexandria, and he would devote large chunks of the rest of his life to the combatting of the Arian heresy. His presence at the council was noted, and within three years, upon the death of the Patriarch of Alexandria, he ascended to that office. During his episcopacy, he was viewed by the Arians as their 'chief enemy and [they] did everything to destroy him.'²¹⁹ They used secular power against the orthodox bishop, and managed to have him exiled five times, but each time he returned unbroken and remained Bishop until his death in 373 AD.²²⁰

²¹⁶ Anon (1946), 18.

²¹⁷ For a survey of the thought and history of the Desert Fathers see Waddell (1936).

²¹⁸ Entitled *The Life of St. Antony*.

²¹⁹ Quasten (1995) Vol III, 20.

²²⁰ Quasten (1995) Vol III, 20.

Turning to his discussion of image, in the first chapter of *De Incarnatione*, Athanasius states,

Upon them, therefore, upon men who, as animals, were essentially impermanent, He bestowed a grace which other creatures lacked - namely, the impress of His own image, a share of the reasonable being of the very Word Himself, so that, reflecting Him and themselves becoming reasonable and expressing the Mind of God even as He does, though in limited degree, they might continue forever in the only blessed and true life of the saints in paradise.²²¹

Here it is demonstrated that Man is made in the image of the Word, or *Logos*, by virtue of his possession of reason, however this image in Man may diminish in likeness if Man fails to be reasonable and turn his will to his lower animal nature. Petterson explains the situation thus, 'This rationality is seen as God's continuous gift, held in trust, and not as human possession.'²²² The likeness must be preserved through 'constant contemplation', or the exercise of reason, so as to avoid the diminution of the image.

Athanasius presents his reader with an interesting approach with regards to the possibility of the destruction of the image. In the second chapter of the *De Incarnatione* he suggests that,

Man, who was created in God's image and in his possession of reason reflected the very Word Himself, was disappearing, and the work of God was being undone...but it was equally monstrous that beings which once had shared the nature of the Word should perish and turn back again into non-existence through corruption.²²³

²²¹ *De Incar.* I.3

²²² Petterson (1995), 28.

²²³ *De Incar.* II. 6

He continues stating that, 'It was supremely unfitting that the work of God in mankind should disappear, either through their own negligence or through the deceit of evil spirits.'²²⁴

These quotations signify an acknowledgement on behalf of Athanasius that the image of God in Man is capable of destruction. Deterioration of the image seems to be well on its way until the intervention of Christ. It is he that comes to repair the image.

E. Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa was born in 335 AD into a well known Christian family with ties to the Christian religion that reached back at least three generations.²²⁵ His grandparents had been chased from their native land during the Diocletian persecutions, and eventually his grandfather suffered martyrdom. Their fervour in the faith was transmitted to future generations of the family, as most of Gregory's ten brothers and sisters were involved heavily in the affairs of the Church. In some cases they were bishops, in other instances abbesses. Amongst the siblings, one stood out early in his life as a true scholar. Gregory's older brother, Saint Basil of Caesarea, took his younger brother under his wing and gave him and educated him upon the death of their father. This was a suitable arrangement as, Gregory's health was poor at best and expeditions far from home were not comfortable experiences for him. It is often suggested that although Basil taught Gregory, in time the student would eventually possess a better grasp of theology and philosophy than his teacher.²²⁶

While Gregory indifferently contemplated his career path, Basil was well on his way to becoming the man who would eventually be bishop of Caesarea. He had begun a

²²⁴ *De Incar.* II. 6

²²⁵ Biographical notes on Gregory of Nyssa are from Moore (1892), 1-8.

²²⁶ Meredith (1999), 53.

religious community, and enlisted the help of his friend, Saint Gregory Nazianzen. Meanwhile, Gregory of Nyssa was delaying his baptism and avoiding choosing a profession when he was startled by a dream.

His mother Emmelia, at her retreat at Annesi, urgently entreated him [Gregory of Nyssa] to be present and take part in a religious ceremony in honour of the Forty Christian Martyrs. He had gone unwillingly, and wearied with his journey and the length of the service, which lasted far into the night, he lay down and fell asleep in the garden. He dreamed that the Martyrs appeared to him, and reproaching him for his indifference, beat him with rods. On awaking he was filled with remorse, and hastened to amend his past neglect by earnest entreaties for mercy and forgiveness.²²⁷

From this point on Gregory's life became much more focussed, and within a short period of time he had moved into his older brother's religious community that he might focus his attention on the study of the scriptures and the Alexandrian, Origen.

The bliss of the religious community did not last, as with the onset of the Arian controversy Basil, recognized for his intelligence, was called out to become the bishop of Caesarea and to take a prominent role in warding off the controversy. Looking to strengthen the resolve of the Church, Basil called on his brother to the vacancy in the See of Nyssa, an inconsequential bishopric, but it would add another orthodox bishop to the fold.

The two would defend the faith together, until the death of Basil. It was at this time that Gregory would truly emerge from the shadow of his brother, and become recognized as the eminent theologian of his era.²²⁸ His strong writings on the Trinity

²²⁷ Moore (1892), 3.

²²⁸ Meredith (1999), 53.

and the Incarnation would bring him headlong into disputes with both the Arians and the Sabellians.²²⁹ This strength of position made him a chief target of Arians who, under trumped up charges, had him exiled in 376 AD. He would remain faithful in exile until the death of the Arian Emperor, who was replaced with Gratian, a good friend of Saint Ambrose, occupied the throne, and returned the deposed bishop to his See. Little is known of Gregory's later life, however, his death is placed in 395 AD.

Gregory's articulation of the image differs slightly from those of his predecessors. In his treatise, *De Opificio Hominis*, Gregory states the plural 'us' in Genesis 1:26 is a direct connection between the image doctrine and the Trinity.²³⁰ His intention here is not necessarily to stray from the notion that Word is the true and perfect image of the Father, and that Man is made in the image of the Son. Here he mentions that this could not be said 'if the archetypes were unlike one another', so his point is rather to prove that although Man is made in the image of the Image, one must also realize that the Image is a part of the Godhead, in which the three persons of the Trinity share one substance. A statement made about one of the persons cannot be totally restricted from the other persons.²³¹

With regard to man's being made in the image of God, later in the same treatise, Gregory states (again with reference to Genesis 1:26),

The image is properly an image so long as it fails at none of those attributes which we

²²⁹ Roughly, Sabellianism is a form of modalism, that is to say that God is One Person of One Substance which simply who simply appears in different forms at different times, ie, Father, Son and Spirit. There are not Three Persons as Catholic Christianity teaches, there is rather One Person who appears under different forms at different times.

²³⁰ *De Opi. Hom.* VI. 3.

²³¹ It is suggested elsewhere that the only statements which can be said exclusively of each person are those pertaining to solely to each person. For instance the only thing that can be said of the Son that does not belong to the Father is that He is begotten.

perceive in the archetype; but where it falls from its resemblance to the prototype it ceases in that respect to be an image; therefore, since one of the attributes that we contemplate in the Divine nature is incomprehensibility of essence, it is clearly necessary that in this point the image should be able to show its imitation of the archetype.

For if, while the archetype transcends comprehension, the nature of the image were comprehended, the contrary character of the attributes we behold in them would prove the defect of the image; but since the nature of our mind, which is in the likeness of the Creator, evades our knowledge, it has an accurate resemblance to the superior nature, figuring by its own unknowableness the incomprehensible nature.²³²

According to Gregory, the image of God in Man is relegated to the mind because, as stated above, the image cannot fail to possess attributes which are found in the thing it is an image of. The thing imaged is incomprehensible in its nature, and so is the mind. It appears that this is the only attribute in Man which stands in a proper relation to God, so as to be called His image in Man.

F. Summary.

The Fathers that have been discussed above all share one distinction in common. They all distinguish between that which is the Image, and those things which approach the Image by a likeness. In his 'Introduction to Genesis 1-11', in the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Andrew Louth sums this shared teaching by suggesting that Genesis 1:26, '...states that human beings were created according to the image of God...In other words, there is an image of God, in accordance with which human beings are fashioned, and that image is the *Logos*.'²³³ The Word is the Image, and men are

²³² *De Opi. Hom.* XI. 3-4.

²³³ Louth (2001a), *l*.

made 'to the image', approaching the Image by a certain likeness.

Virtually every source cited in the course of this paper suggests (seemingly rightly) that Augustine is an innovator not only in his interpretation of Genesis 1:26, but also in the implications which proceed from that change in interpretation.²³⁴ Even those scholars who suggest that there is at least some patristic precedent for some of what Augustine says, are unable to avoid attributing him with a great deal of originality as well.²³⁵ What is not agreed upon is whether the innovation is beneficial or detrimental to the Christian understanding of image.

Michael Azkoul, for instance, clearly derides Augustine's attempts to understand Man and God in the articulated manner. He suggests that Augustinianism is responsible 'in large measure, for the division between East and West; and indeed, even for the Occident's loss of the patristic spirit.'²³⁶ He also adds, 'the difference between the Fathers, Latin, Greek, Oriental, and Russian, are superficial, the result of circumstance and local need. Augustine, however does not belong to that "blessed fraternity," if I may borrow Plato's expression.'²³⁷ Last, Azkoul also suggests that Augustine 'became to the West what Origen failed to become for the East...'.²³⁸ Certainly less than

²³⁴ See for instance the work of Sullivan in *The Image of God*, Cary's - the title of who's work speaks for itself - *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*, Ladner's *The Idea of Reform*, Azkoul's *The Influence of Augustine of Hippo on the Orthodox Church*, all of which clearly argue that Augustine must be seen as an innovator when it comes to the doctrine of the image of God in Man.

²³⁵ See Markus (1964), McCool (1959), and Clark (1994), all of who cite precedent for elements of Augustine's approach to the question, yet still hold him up as an innovator.

²³⁶ Azkoul (1990), ii.

²³⁷ Azkoul (1990), iii.

²³⁸ Azkoul (1990), 7.

flattering observations.²³⁹

In opposition to Azkoul, stands Gerhart B. Ladner, who in his now famous book, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*, argues that Augustine's novel position is the necessary expression of the reform idea which runs throughout history,²⁴⁰ as it remedies further problems which are not discarded by older definitions, such as Pelagianism.²⁴¹ In his account Augustine's originality is a necessity.

The degree to which Augustine is original may quickly become caricatured if one is not careful. There are levels of universal similarity which must be pointed out in order to be fair to Augustine. It is clear, for instance, that from Justin Martyr onward, almost the entire body of Patristic writing is in agreement with regard to the Trinitarian interpretation of the first plural of Genesis 1:26 - 'Let **us** make' - which suggests that the entire Trinity is at work in creation. Origen, as pointed out above, being an occasional exception. Here Augustine is clearly in line with the rest of the Fathers.²⁴² He also clearly sees Christ as the Image of the Father. This point has been articulated earlier in this paper.²⁴³

²³⁹ It is worth noting that this hostility to Augustine is not shared by the entire Orthodox Communion, as suggested by Bishop Kallistos in his book *The Orthodox Way*. While there is a group which shares Azkoul's rejection of the Western theological tradition - see also Vladimir Lossky's *In The Image and Likeness of God* where he argues against the Western formulation of Atonement and Western Trinitarianism - there are many Orthodox who find Augustine's work helpful. See the work of Fr. Andrew Louth, as well as Fr. Seraphim Rose in his work *The Place of Blessed Augustine in the Orthodox Church*.

²⁴⁰ At Ladner (1967), 35 he defines the 'idea of reform' as, '...the free, intentional and ever perfectible, multiple, prolonged and ever repeated efforts by man to reassert and augment values pre-existent in the spiritual-material compound of the world.'

²⁴¹ See Ladner (1959), 162-164 but also Ladner (1954), 871. In these passages Ladner is not accusing the East of Pelagianism, but rather is suggesting that Augustinian emphases provide an articulate guard against this heresy.

²⁴² Sullivan (1963), 168-169, 178.

²⁴³ See (33) for Augustine's position on this issue.

Augustine's originality is made clear by his treatment of the second plural in Genesis 1:26. There is no divergence up to 'Let us make', which is universally interpreted as being Trinitarian, however Augustine continues the trend into 'in our image'. Here Augustine openly denies that it is possible to read this passage as saying 'after the image'. In an important passage, where Augustine distances himself from the rest of the Fathers, he says, 'Some people see the following distinction here: they like to take only the Son as being image, and man as being not image but 'to the image'. However, the Apostle refutes them by saying, *The man ought not to cover his head as he is the image and glory of God* (1Cor11:7) He did not say 'he is to the image,' but just 'he is the image'.²⁴⁴

Augustine suggests that Man himself is an image of God '...not made in any sense equal, being created by him, not born of him,' but he is an image none the less.²⁴⁵ This image is the direct result of creation by the Trinity. Describing the act Augustine says, '...do it therefore to the image of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so that Man might subsist as the image of God; and God is three.'²⁴⁶ In Augustine's account Man in an image, he is not made to the image.²⁴⁷

Dionysius on the other hand, although at times unclear as a result of his unsystematic approach, seems to be entirely in line with the traditional patristic interpretation. Earlier in this paper, it has been demonstrated that unlike all of the analogies within the Dionysian *Corpus*, where there is no precise relationship between

²⁴⁴ DT. VII. 4. [12]. 231.

²⁴⁵ DT. VII. 4. [12]. 231.

²⁴⁶ DT. VII. 4. [12]. 231.

²⁴⁷ Sullivan (1963), 166 points out that Augustine's claim that the psychological trinity in Man is an image of God does appear until late in the *Confessiones*, (XII. 32. 292), and even then it is only mentioned. The idea was not given full exposition until the *De Trinitate*. Up until this point, Augustine adheres to the articulation given by earlier Fathers.

cause and effect, the in the relation between Word and Father there is exact parody.²⁴⁸

The Son is therefore the image of the Father in a way that no created thing can share.

The only thing which is rightly called image in the Dionysian system is the Son of God, who is the image of the Father.

With regard to God's image in Man Dionysius writes,

God has made us in his image and that he has given us a share of the divine condition and uplifting. Then it reminds us that when we had lost the divine gifts because of our own folly, God took the trouble to recall us to our original condition through adventitious gifts...²⁴⁹

In this short passage, Dionysius has further demonstrated his allegiance to the more traditional view of the created image.²⁵⁰ He demonstrates that the image can be lost and restored.

What seems like a small change to the interpretation of a very small passage of the scriptures carries with it some very important implications. The Dionysian approach, along with the more traditional Fathers, are very careful to guard distance between God and Man. Any likeness to God found in Man can only exist at the level of analogy. The Son is the only true image. On the other hand, Augustine feels perfectly justified in calling both Man and the Son images. This creates a seemingly uneasy situation, in which many are willing to suggest that Augustine does not guard the transcendence of God, amongst other charges. It will be the task of the final chapter to

²⁴⁸ See (51) for discussion of parity between Father and Son in Dionysius.

²⁴⁹ EH. 3. [7]. 218.

²⁵⁰ Along with the elements of the traditional interpretation of the created image in this paper, Ladner in the *Idea of Reform* makes much of the difference between Augustine and earlier Fathers on the notion of the return to Paradise as the end for Man. Ladner suggests that many earlier Fathers suggested that this return to Eden was the goal, while Augustine attempts to suggest that man's end is not simply a return to Eden, but something more.

understand the theology of each position so as to be able to understand these claims, and be able to determine the accuracy of some of the charges that are laid.

Chapter Six:
Proximity and Distance.

A. Introduction.

In the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that Augustine and Dionysius diverge over the nature of the created image of God in Man. For Augustine Man is made in the image of the Trinitarian God and as a result the image in the soul is Trinitarian. As a result of its exalted position, the image in Man plays an important role in Man's recovery for the separation from God wrought by sin. In the Dionysian texts, following the example of earlier Fathers of the Church, Man is made 'to the Image', who is the Word. Dionysius is clear, only one relationship deserves the title of image; the Son is the image of the Father. Man is made to the Image, and like everything in the created *cosmos*, the extent to which he is an image is at the ontological level of analogy. Man is not a proper image.

Prior to any further discussion of what this change in interpretation implies, one must be sure to understand a distinction which has been raised several times throughout the course of this thesis. All throughout the analysis presented here has been encountered a distinction between, on the one hand, likenesses/analogies/artificial images, and on the other, the image proper/natural image. To this point this distinction has presented little problem, however Augustine's change in interpretation alters this happy situation. For Augustine, the image of God in Man is a crossing over point from likeness/analogy/artificial image to the image proper /natural image, a title shared with God the Son, who is the image of the Father. For Dionysius what is spoken of in Genesis 1:26 is undoubtedly restricted to the level of likeness/analogy/artificial image. There is only one Image, and creation cannot have any share in that title, it may only approach by likeness.

In the chapter which follows from this point, it is proposed that exploration be made as to why Augustine feels that this alteration is both justifiable and inevitable. On the other hand, exploration will also be made as to why Dionysius does not advocate the approach taken by Augustine.

B. Augustinian Proximity.

The Augustinian claim that memory, will and understanding, the image of God in Man, can rightfully be called by the title 'image' is rooted deeply in the notion of derivation discussed briefly in Chapter One.²⁵⁰ As has been argued, Augustine represents 'a fundamental plotinian association in with the notion of image,' because, 'The inferior resemblance is not only related to its superior model by way of likeness, but also by reason of some production or fashioning on the part of the superior...'.²⁵¹ The title 'image' is rightly applied only in circumstances where the like object in question has been derived from its archetype. The famous example used to illustrate this point is that of two eggs. In the Plotinian account, which Augustine embraces, one might see two white eggs laid by different hens next to each other which look exactly alike, however, this may be as deep as their relationship may go. They are simply 'like'. On the other hand, one might see a brown egg and a white egg and it might be true that the brown egg is an image of the white, because even though they depart in likeness, they share in derivation should they have come from the same hen.²⁵² Therefore, Sullivan correctly points out that for Augustine, 'Image and likeness must be distinguished, for not every likeness is an image, though every image must be a

²⁵⁰ See Section 'E' in Chapter One (33) entitled, 'Image of God.'

²⁵¹ Sullivan (1963), 9-10.

²⁵² Markus (1964), 125 points out that Augustine uses the example of eggs in discussion of the concept of image in his work *De div. quaest.* LXXXIII.

likeness.’²⁵³

The question might then be asked as to how it is that Augustine can apply the title of image proper to the created image of God in Man. For an answer to this question one must once again turn to the passage in Book VII where Augustine differentiates himself from previous Fathers, in which Augustine suggests,

But that image of God [the created image] was not made in any sense equal, being created by him, not born of him; so to make this point he is image in such a way as to be “to the image”; that is he is not equated in perfect parity with God but approaches him in a certain similarity. One does not approach God by moving across intervals of place, but by likeness or similarity, and one moves away from him by dissimilarity or unlikeness.²⁵⁴

The eternal Image and the created image of God in Man share in this concept of derivation that is so necessary for Augustine’s concept of image. The Son is begotten of the Father ‘in perfect parity’, as stated above, in other words there is no diminution in this instance of derivation. The created image, on the other hand, is created by God and hence is also derived from God, however, it lacks the perfect parity of the perfect Image (the Son). The created image is image, however, it departs in likeness, while the Son does not.

A second element of Augustine’s Neoplatonic heritage which heavily influences discussion of proximity/distance between image and archetype is the qualified manner in which the general hierarchy of Neoplatonism is adopted by Augustine. As discussed above, the Neoplatonists essentially saw the hierarchy as being comprised of four main

²⁵³ Sullivan (1963), 12-13.

²⁵⁴ DT. VII. 4. [12]. 231.

tiers being One, Mind, Soul and Bodies. Phillip Cary suggests that ‘the really striking thing, for our purposes, is what Augustine omits: Plotinus’ concept of the One either disappears or else melts into the divine Mind.’²⁵⁵

This subtle change makes a tremendous difference in the level of affinity that can be posited to exist between God and Man, especially when compared to the appropriation of the same cosmological structure suggested in the works of Dionysius as is also argued in Cary’s *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self*. Cary states,

What Augustine in effect proposes is to draw the line between Creator and creature at the boundary between the divine Mind and the Soul. Denys [Dionysius], on the other hand, clearly draws the line at the boundary between One and Mind, as he firmly identifies the Triune God of Christianity with the incomprehensible One of Neoplatonism...The intelligible world of Plotinus’ divine Mind thus becomes in Denys a created realm, below the level of what is strictly divine...It is a celestial realm of immortal intelligences, but it is not God. In other words, when looking at the second level of Plotinus’ hierarchy of being, Augustine thinks he sees the Creator and Denys thinks he sees creatures. In fact Plato’s intelligible world, which in Augustine becomes the mind of God, becomes in Denys the realm of the angels.²⁵⁶

The absolute transcendence which guards the only true image of God and keeps it within the life of the divine Trinity in Dionysius is altered by Augustine’s movement of Man into a realm of much closer proximity to God.

A third factor enters into a discussion of Augustine’s adopting a new position on Genesis 1:26. As was noted in the introduction to this thesis, Plotinus, who Sullivan demonstrates to be Augustine’s primary influence on this particular topic, suggests that

²⁵⁵ Cary (2000), 56.

²⁵⁶ Cary (2000), 56.

the embodied soul has not fallen away entirely from the One, allowing a connection to remain between the embodied soul and the One.²⁵⁷ This position inclines Augustine to see little wrong with acknowledging a common category shared between both God and the human soul, however disparate the likeness is of the former to the later.

It is important to remember that these Neoplatonic teachings which explain why Augustine is able to adopt the position he does are not his motivation for making his interpretation. Augustine sees an argument for positing this position in the scriptures. He understands 'Let us make man in our image' as God genuinely bestowing his image on Man in creation. He then turns to Saint Paul who also refers to Man as the image of God vindicating his interpretation of Genesis 1:26. The Neoplatonic tenets serve to explain the substance behind what Augustine truly believes to be a scriptural claim.²⁵⁸

It is in discussion of the three adaptations of Neoplatonism where one finds reasons for, on one hand, Augustine's suggestion of a close relationship between the human soul and God which fits into the definition of image, and on the other hand, Dionysius' guarding of a certain distance between any created image such that it is really wholly other than a proper image, but yet approaches God in likeness, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter.

C. Dionysian Distance.

This articulation, offered by Augustine, has proved startling to some theologians, amongst them Vladimir Lossky who suggests that,

The idea of kinship implied in the Hellenic notion of the image was insufficient, as has been said, for a Christian doctrine of the *Logos*, the consubstantial image of the Father:

²⁵⁷ See section 'D' in the Introduction (5) entitled 'Why Augustine and Dionysius?'.

²⁵⁸ DT. VII. 4 where the scriptural position is presented.

indeed, here no difference at all of nature may be admitted. In Christian anthropology, on the other hand, the idea of kinship would have been excessive, for the *diastema*, the distance between uncreated and created natures is infinite. Thus, as in Trinitarian theology, the term “image” - or, rather “in the image” - applied to man must be given a new meaning...This personal element in anthropology, discovered by Christian thought, does not indicate, in itself, a relationship of participation, much less a “kinship” with God, but rather an analogy...”²⁵⁹

Lossky suggests that anyone trying to establish such a strong ‘ontological link’ between God and Man, through Man’s possession of God’s image, blurs the boundary between creature and creator, jeopardizing God’s transcendence and is left advocating a form of pantheism, or a worst the utter destruction of God.²⁶⁰ In Lossky’s argument the created image must be left at the level of analogy rather than kinship, which in the theology of image belongs to Christ alone. Lossky, then, as will be demonstrated below, is far more comfortable with the articulation provided by Dionysius.

If there is one area in which Dionysian scholarship seems be largely in agreement, it is over Dionysius’ guarding of the transcendence of God. As Andrew Louth points out, Dionysius’ insistence on the importance of unlike symbolism is confirmation of his placing distance between the image and the archetype.²⁶¹ In addition to the indications noted in the discussion of Augustine, Dionysius, as explained above,²⁶² exhibits a preference for what he calls the ‘incongruous dissimilarities’ because, unlike more exalted images, the temptation to consider image and archetype as

²⁵⁹ Lossky (1974), 137.

²⁶⁰ Clark (2001), 96.

²⁶¹ Louth (1989), 45.

²⁶² Cite app. Section in Ch 3.

being closely related is alleviated.²⁶³ As he says, ‘Since the way of negation appears to be more suitable to the realm of the divine and since positive affirmations are always unfitting to the inexpressible, a manifestation through dissimilar shapes is more correctly to be applied to the invisible.’²⁶⁴ No created image then, for Dionysius, reaches beyond the level of analogy, and the unlike images are most appropriate because they are constant reminders of this truth. While they bear similarity, they are yet all together dissimilar.

Were these images the only indications of Dionysius’ guarding of the transcendence of God, through his position on the ultimate dissimilarity of any image there might be room for confusion, however Dionysius finds multiple other ways of reiterating this to his reader.

In his treatise, *The Divine Names*, Dionysius opens with a discussion which praises the use of scriptural names when discussing God because the writers of scripture were granted ‘a power by which, in a manner surpassing speech and knowledge, we reach a union superior to anything available to us by way of our own abilities or activities in the realm of discourse or intellect.’²⁶⁵ Here, then, there is a clear distance articulated between those images that Man can create through his own musing about the divine, and those images which are revealed in the scriptures. The images of scripture, also ultimately succumb to the same criticism as those generated by ‘discourse or intellect’. Even the scriptural images, which are fed by the divine Light are subject to negation, although they have the guarantee of leading the soul in the proper direction.

As stated above, the divine Light which shines down through the hierarchical

²⁶³ CH.2.[3].150.

²⁶⁴ CH.2.[3].150.

²⁶⁵ DN.1.[1].49.

system envisioned by Dionysius originates with God himself. This might lead one to suggest that in the images created by this Light that God is present, thus violating any true notion of the transcendent God. Dionysius refutes this criticism easily by suggesting that 'In reality there is no exact likeness between caused and cause, for the caused carry within themselves only such images of their originating sources as are possible for them, whereas the causes themselves are located in a realm transcending the caused...'.²⁶⁶ The divine Light originates in God and flows outward through creation, however not all levels of creation are capable of receiving the fullness of the divine Light. At each level it is graded in such a way as to take into account the level of creation below it so that the message is fitted to the capabilities of the receiver. Each level in the cosmological hierarchy has a different nature, and is thus differently able to receive the message sent from God. Take for example the angelic ranks. God illuminates the seraphim, who in turn, recognizing the capabilities of the cherubim tailor the divine Light so that it is capable of being received by its lower brothers. This process continues until the illuminations reach 'our hierarchy' and come out in the form of the various ranks of images, graded so the Man may receive them. In addition to the divisions noted in the *cosmos* itself, there is a large gap noted between the caused and the transcendent which is greater than any noted amongst the created natures.

A third fact which clarifies the reality of distance between image and archetype when speaking of the created image is the observation that, while this procession of divine Light follows very closely the Neoplatonic notion of procession and return, it differs in one major way. As pointed out above, what is proceeding from God falls into the realm of subjective epistemology, and not objective ontology.²⁶⁷ If what were being

²⁶⁶ DN.2[8].64.

²⁶⁷ This fact is noted by Gersh (1978), 286.



described here was emanation, it would be much harder to make the case that there wasn't some direct presence of the divine in its creation, however, what is being discussed is more accurately described as information, and not a bestowal of being.

Image allows Man to know God in some respect, just not according to his nature.²⁶⁸ If any image were to exist in too close a proximity to its archetype, it could claim to reveal the archetype's nature, and hence violate transcendence.

In addition to other Neoplatonic influences on Dionysius discussed above which lead him to guard the distance between God and all creation, there is one other important factor which must be noted. Dionysius clearly follows in the footsteps of Iamblichus and Proclus, neither of whom would suggest that any part of the soul remains unfallen. For them the soul is separated from the One and may only return through external rites granted to the by the Divine. Within the context of these influences, it is easy to see part of the reason for Dionysius' reluctance to suggest that the soul possesses an immediate tendency toward God.²⁶⁹

While there are 'grades' of images within the Dionysian *Corpus*, Dionysius strongly reminds his readers that all of them are at the level of analogy, with the exception of the true image which is Christ. As he says in *The Celestial Hierarchy* with reference to the difference between the conceptual names versus the more physical imagery, 'Now these sacred shapes certainly show more reverence and seem vastly superior to the making of images drawn from the world. Yet they are actually no less defective than this latter, for the Deity is beyond every manifestation...'.²⁷⁰ For Dionysius all of the images are analogies, not even the created image of God in Man

²⁶⁸ DN.7.[3].108.

²⁶⁹ See section 'D' of Chapter One (24).

²⁷⁰ CH. 2. [3]. 149.

surpasses this barrier.

D. Augustine's textual Refutation of Proximity.

While it is true that Augustine seems to posit a closer relationship between the created image and God than most of the Fathers before him do, he is careful to make certain that his proximity is well qualified.

It is somewhat concerning to note that some of the most clear, correct positions that scholars have taken on Augustine's theology of image, specifically on the topic of the image of God in Man proximity to the archetype, come from works which are actually quite old.²⁷¹ In the *De Trinitate*, Augustine clearly establishes distance between any created image, and God himself. Speaking in generality near the very beginning of his work, Augustine states that 'there will be no more comparisons when there is direct vision face to face.'²⁷² This is a sentiment echoed throughout Augustine's major work. This general statement with regards to the various grades of images (ie, theophanies, trinities, created image) holds true when one analyses Augustine's statements with regards to the various levels treated individually.

Augustine very clearly establishes the distance between God and the Old Testament theophanies. In the cases within the Old Testament where God has appeared to men, and been seen by their physical eyes,²⁷³ as in His interaction with Adam in the Garden of Eden,²⁷⁴ the visit of the three men who called 'Lord' to Abraham,²⁷⁵ the

²⁷¹ See, for example, Lossky (1954), Markus (1967), Portalie (1960), all of whom take up this textually demonstrable positions.

²⁷² DT. I.3.[21].80.

²⁷³ DT. II.2.[11].105.

²⁷⁴ Genesis 3:8.

²⁷⁵ Genesis 18:1.

appearance in the burning bush,²⁷⁶ and others, Augustine suggests that these passages allow for no other interpretation than that they are works wrought by the angelic hosts on behalf of God, rather than being actual appearances of God himself, or one specific person of the triune God. These instances can only be the work of the angels for two main reasons, first, that they are witnesses with the physical eyes and second that an appearance by any one person of the Trinity would infringe on the specific temporal mission that those person would perform in New Testament times.²⁷⁷ Realizing that these manifestations of the divine can only be the work of the angels at the behest of God, their content is relegated to, using the words of Lossky cited above, the level of analogy and not kinship.

The next level of imagery which Augustine discusses are the *vestigia*, or the various ‘trinities’ of creation which are not the created image of the human soul, for example the familial trinity; the lover, the beloved, and the love that binds them.²⁷⁸ With regards to the ‘trinities’, Augustine does not deny that there does exist some likeness between these (and all) images and God himself. He asks, ‘Is there anything, after all, that does not bear a likeness to God after its own kind and fashion, seeing that God made all things very good for no other reason than that he himself is supremely good?’²⁷⁹ These trinities, while they clearly bear a likeness to God, still represent an image distanced from its archetype. Amongst the group of identifiable ‘trinities’, Augustine distinguishes between those belonging to the inner man, and those belonging

²⁷⁶ Exodus 3:1.

²⁷⁷ See above (60-62) for explication on these two important points.

²⁷⁸ See (26) for details concerning the ‘familial trinity’.

²⁷⁹ D.T. XI.2.[8].310.

to the outer man, which he says bear some 'resemblance to the inner man.'²⁸⁰ All trinities bear some resemblance to the Trinity, however those of the inner are more proximus than those of the outer.

It is Augustine's position that the 'trinities' represent less than perfect attempts at refining the created image of the Trinity in Man. The 'trinities' of the outer man, which are more easily identifiable,²⁸¹ are problematic and inaccurate. One seeks those which are more accurate in the inner man, and within this category Man searches for the best possible image within man's highest categories. These 'trinities' then provide a road map to the created image, the highest 'trinity' of the created order, and represent a subordinate kind of image to the actual created image.

The highest possible created image is clearly located in the rational mind. However, Augustine offers a clear qualification of the proximity of this image to its archetype in his discussion of the hypostatic union of God and Man in Christ. He states within this passage already cited above,

But the image of God was not made in any sense equal, being created by him not born of him; so to make this point he is image in such a way as to be 'to the image'; that is, he is not equated in perfect parity with God but approaches him in a certain similarity...How could it be our image when the Son is the image of the Father alone? But as I said, man is said to be 'to the image' because of the disparity of his likeness to God, and 'to our image' to show that man is the image of the trinity; not equal to the trinity as the Son is equal to the Father, but approaching it as has been said by a certain likeness, as one can talk of a certain proximity between things distant from each other,

²⁸⁰ D.T. XI.Pro.[1].303.

²⁸¹ In D.T. XI.Pro.[1].303., Augustine suggest that 'even if it [the outward trinity] is not a more accurate model, it may perhaps be easier to distinguish.'

not proximity of place but of a sort of imitation.²⁸²

It is made clear in the above passage that while the created image stands in relation to the thing it is the image of as 'things distant to each other', it cannot be compared to the proximity of the real image which is the Son, because it is the Son which is equal to the Trinity. Simply because Augustine is willing to admit Man a share in the category 'image' does not mean that the proximity the Son experiences with the Father can ever be reached by Man.

An analysis of Augustine's ranks of images, from theophanies to 'trinities', 'trinities' to the created image itself, shows that each level demonstrates a closer, more refined relationship to the Trinitarian God than the previous, however Augustine is careful to acknowledge the infinite distance between the various images in creation and their creator.

²⁸²

D.T. VII.4.[12].231.

*Conclusion:
Degrees of Disagreement.*

A. Restraint and Freedom.

At the outset of this thesis, it was claimed that amongst the sundry reasons for engaging the theology of image was its importance with regard to developing an understanding central tenets of Christian doctrine, particularly the doctrine of the Trinity, and Incarnation/Christology.

Having explored the relationship between Augustine and Dionysius in the previous six chapters, and in the process, having uncovered divergences both small and great, what remains is some comment on how what is offered by way of definition by the two fits with what are understood as the Catholic doctrines. One might phrase the question something like this: ‘Seeing that there are strong differences between Augustine and Dionysius’ understanding of the concept of image, do these differences affect how either author stands in relation to the doctrines listed above, or are the differences relegated to a level on which Christians have freedom to postulate?’

We have seen at least two responses to this question in the course of this paper. There is a position which finds Augustine’s brand of originality disconcerting, favouring Dionysius’ approach.²⁸³ On the other hand, we have seen those who see Augustine’s position as the logical extension of the scriptures, and patristic principles and thus they present Augustine as the culmination of those who go before him. If these before him are not wrong, they are at least more limited than Augustine in their understanding.²⁸⁴ There is a third position though, which although not overly present in modern presentations, fills out the range of possible responses. That is the one registered by

²⁸³ See the quotation from Azkoul in Chapter Five (89).

²⁸⁴ See Ladner’s argument which is briefly presented in Chapter Five, (90) The argument is also present in the work of Sullivan (1963).

Dante Alighieri in the *Paradiso*. In Cantos X - XIV Dante describes the theologians in heaven circling in two concentric rings, all earthly rivalries reconciled, all seeming contradictions between the great doctors are shown ultimately to come together, symbolized by the interaction between Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Saint Bonaventura one a Dominican, the other a Franciscan in which Saint Bonaventura says, 'The love that makes me beautiful / moves me to speak about that other guide [Aquinas], / the cause of such high praise concerning mine. / We should not mention one without the other, / since both did battle for a single cause, / so let their fame shine gloriously as one.'²⁸⁵ If it is true for Aquinas and Bonaventura it may also be true for Augustine and Dionysius.

This is a major question which reaches far beyond the bounds of a thesis this size, however it begs exploration.

B. Similarity of Artificial Images.

It must be noted that most of the discussion in these concluding pages circulates around the a discussion of the image of God in Man, and the Image of God, being the eternal Word. There is good reason for this, as although difference have been identified at every level in the hierarchy of images (both artificial and natural) the most substantial change revolves around how it is that Man is made in the image of God.

It one returns back to the first level of images treated, being those of the Scriptures, it was concluded that in both cases the images belonged to the realm of likeness or analogy. The difference between them existed in the manner of their interpretation, and the purpose that they served. In the discussion of the Trinitarian *vestigia* in the work of Augustine and the triads made up of individual vestiges in Dionysius, the same conclusion was again reached with regard to the ontological level

²⁸⁵ Par. XI. 31-36. 460.

of the images discussed - again they were strictly relegated to the level of likeness or analogy. They differed in use and structure. It is only upon reaching the image of God in Man that ontological split occurs. Here Augustine is willing to grant Man the full title of image, while for Dionysius, the image of God in Man is relegated to likeness and analogy, as is all creation. It is here that the major difference occurs, and this one category carries major implications. Elsewhere, there are important difference to be noted, they simply do not carry the doctrinal implications that the discussion of the created image of God in Man does.

C. The Middle Ages.

The natural extension of an exploration of the question about the relationship between the theologies presented by Augustine and Dionysius, is to spend time in the study of the Middle Ages where so much explicit emphasis was placed drawing these two figures together. Particularly, perhaps the most important works of the Middle Ages, those produced by John Scotus Eriugena, Saint Bonaventure, and Saint Thomas Aquinas, all present themselves as works which have as part of their goals this project.

It is interesting to note that it is suggested by Wayne J. Hankey that it is a deficiency on the part of Augustinian theology which makes this synthesis desirable. He states,

...those philosophical theologians who wished to remain faithful to Augustine's teaching found it necessary to have recourse to the other major pagan and Christian Neoplatonic tradition which forms Latin theology. The Plotinian-Augustinian tradition, though primary in Western theology, was supplemented by the Procline-Dionysian stream as soon as figures appeared who know both.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶

Hankey (1997b), 1.

According to Hankey, those who wished to keep the psychological image as articulated by Augustine, felt it necessary to place it within the context of the Dionysian *cosmos*, where the created image of God in Man was kept to the level of analogy. If this is correct, then, it demonstrates a fair amount of uncomfortableness on the part of the Mediaevals in placing Man on a sliding scale of image with God the Son, even when understanding Man to be on the low end of image, but still an image. It seems to have been enough of an ontological link to be disconcerting.

If this postulation is part of the motivation for bringing Dionysius and Augustine together in the Middle Ages then it is at least an indication of the answer to our original question posed in this conclusion, however, much more exploration is required.

C. The Complexity of Development.²⁸⁷

The evaluation of the relationship between Catholic teaching and the position forwarded by Augustine and Dionysius has taken on additional complication as discussions of the development of doctrine become all the more prevalent. Not only can Augustine and Dionysius be measured against purely historical standards, but the arguments for development also need to be engaged, whether one agrees with the principle or not, seeing that this position has been invoked by at least two important Roman Catholic scholars who have been engaged throughout this thesis.²⁸⁸

In a modest way this thesis has attempted to outline the differences and similarities presented to the reader of Augustine and Dionysius, who is attempting to

²⁸⁷ The 'Development of Doctrine' has been subject to much comment, especially in modern times where it become justification for adopting anything new. It is given a more conservative articulation in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* written by John Henry (Cardinal) Newman. It is to this work that one might turn for a more thoughtful (and influential) articulation of this idea.

²⁸⁸ See Sullivan (1963) and Ladner (1967), both of whom argue that the Augustinian changes represent correct theological developments.

understand the theology of image as it is presented in these two thinkers. In accomplishing this (to whatever degree it has been accomplished) only a part of the task has been completed as is demonstrated above. This topic cries for further evaluation and by proceeding in the manner suggested above an in-depth critical evaluation might be accomplished.

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